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General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

4th plenary meeting
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New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.15 a.m.

Agenda item 109

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/62/1)

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 21 September 2007, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization under agenda item 109. I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your election. Welcome, all, to New York in this wonderful season. For me, it is both a pleasure and an honour to be with you for the opening of the general debate of the sixty-second session of our General Assembly. I believe that this year will be the most intense in our history. I also very firmly believe that, together, we can make it one of the most fruitful.

We have gotten off to a good start. Last week, we were able to bring together a high-level meeting of the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group, which is a clear priority. Leaders from around the world also met to discuss the course to be taken in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, in Darfur and in Iraq.

And yesterday we had a very productive conference on climate change. The aim was to marshal energies, political determination and to coordinate our action by all meeting under the same roof, that of the United Nations, so that we will all be united in combating climate change. It was already any enormous undertaking, and it is in this way that I hope that we will work together in the future.

(*spoke in English*)

May I repeat, it is a model of how I hope we can work together in the future.

Looking to the coming year, and beyond, we can foresee a daunting array of challenges to come. They are problems that respect no borders, that no country, big or small, rich or poor, can resolve on its own.

More than ever, we live in an era of collective action. Often it seems as though everybody wants the United Nations to do everything. We cannot deliver everything, of course. But that cannot be an excuse for doing nothing.

Hence the theme of these remarks — "A Stronger United Nations for a Better World".

Our changing world needs a stronger United Nations. We all understand the importance of a strong, robust, empowered Secretariat. My vision is an administration focused on results — efficient, directed, pragmatic and accountable — an administration representing excellence, integrity and pride in serving the global good.

To deliver on this vision, we must modernize ourselves. We need an internal climate change at the United Nations. We need to think freshly about how we

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do our work. Our main themes should be to simplify, rationalize and delegate.

To deliver on the world's high expectations for us, we need to be faster, more flexible and mobile. We need to pay less attention to rhetoric and more attention to results — to getting things done.

I place a very high priority on implementing the management reforms that the General Assembly has previously approved to promote greater transparency, accountability and efficiency. I welcome the progress we have made over the past nine months in streamlining our budget processes, crafting our Capital Master Plan and putting our financial house in order. I am especially grateful to the 102 Governments that have paid their annual budget assessments in full.

Together, we successfully reorganized our peacekeeping operations, affecting more than 100,000 United Nations personnel in 18 multinational missions. I plan to continue the effort by strengthening the Department of Political Affairs. We must become more proactive in responding to crises. Well-planned and well-executed preventive diplomacy can save many lives and forestall many tragedies — a core Charter responsibility of our United Nations.

I will leave no stone unturned to end the tragedy in Darfur. The Government of Sudan must live up to its pledge to join comprehensive peace talks and implement a ceasefire. We must also move forward with the agreement that ended the long-running civil war between north and south and prepare for elections in 2009.

The crisis in Darfur grew from many causes. Any enduring solution must address all of them — security, politics, resources, water, humanitarian and development issues. There, as elsewhere, we must deal with the root causes of conflict, however complex and entangled.

Peace in the Middle East is vital to the stability of the region and the world. We know what is required — an end to violence, an end to occupation, the creation of a Palestinian State at peace with itself and Israel, and a comprehensive regional peace between Israel and the Arab world.

With renewed leadership from the Arab world and the United States, coupled with the efforts of the Quartet representative, Mr. Tony Blair, the elements for a renewed push for peace are being brought together.

We also sincerely hope that the Lebanese people, through national reconciliation, will be able to restore political and social stability by electing their new president in accordance with their constitutional process.

Iraq has become the whole world's problem. With the newly adopted Security Council resolution 1770 (2007), the United Nations has an important role to play in promoting political negotiation and national reconciliation, as well as in providing humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people. But we recognize that the safety and security of United Nations staff is paramount.

In Afghanistan, we must work more effectively with our partners to deal with drug trafficking and the financing of terrorism.

We are closely following events in Myanmar. We again urge the authorities in Myanmar to exercise utmost restraint, to engage without delay in dialogue with all the relevant parties to the national reconciliation process on the issues of concern to the people of Myanmar. In this regard, my Special Adviser is expected to visit Myanmar very soon.

From my first day in office, I have stressed the importance of disarmament, as mandated most recently in the General Assembly's support for my proposal to establish an Office for Disarmament Affairs. We must reinvigorate our efforts to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related technology, especially to prevent such material from falling into the hands of terrorists. I am encouraged by recent progress on the issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I sincerely hope that the forthcoming inter-Korean summit meeting will create a historic momentum to bring peace, security and eventually a peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. I am confident that we will reach a negotiated solution with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Our ultimate goal remains the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction. If we fail, these weapons may one day eliminate us.

We at the United Nations must take the long view, in politics as in life. Even as we deal with the here and now, we must think about tomorrow. Yesterday, I spoke about climate change as a defining issue of our time. We all agreed: now is the time for action. Let us go to Bali and make a breakthrough. We also agreed that solutions to global warming cannot

come at the expense of economic development, the second pillar of the work of the United Nations. Issues of development and social equity cannot take a back seat to issues of peace and security.

This year marks the midpoint for our Millennium Development Goals. We have had successes. Around the world, unprecedented numbers of people are lifting themselves out of poverty. Yet the rising tide of globalization has not lifted all boats.

We see this most acutely in Africa, home to most of what one World Bank economist calls "the bottom billion" of the world's poor. We must pay careful attention to these nations with special needs. We must heed the voices of the world's poorest peoples, who too often go unheard.

That is why I convened the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group earlier this month, bringing together leaders of major multilateral development organizations.

Our Millennium Development Goals remain achievable so long as we help the poorest nations break free of the traps that ensnare them. Some of those traps relate to bad governance, others to disease and poor health care. It is intolerable that HIV/AIDS continues as a modern-day scourge. It is intolerable that almost 10 million children die each year before their fifth birthday, mostly from such preventable diseases as malaria. It is a scar on the moral conscience of the world.

This is not to say that we will do things that these countries should, and can and do, do for themselves. The "Asian Miracle" has shown that successful development owes much to smart choices and rigorous execution.

For our part, we must try to make our multilateral development programmes more effective and coherent, to better integrate our efforts in health, education, agriculture and infrastructure so as to deliver better results.

For their part, donor nations must do more to deliver on their promises of aid, debt relief and market access. Open, fair and non-discriminatory market access, trading and financial systems are critical to the future of every developing country, in Africa and elsewhere. That is why we must do our utmost to advance the Doha Development Agenda, with its emphasis on development and aid for trade.

The third pillar of the United Nations, human rights, is codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which marks its sixtieth anniversary in 2008. The Human Rights Council must live up to its responsibilities as the torchbearer for human rights consistently and equitably around the world. I will strive to translate the concept of our responsibility to protect from words to deeds, to ensure timely action so that populations do not face genocide, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity.

Our international tribunals continue their work, from Rwanda to Sierra Leone and soon in Lebanon. The age of impunity is dead.

Meanwhile, the brave and exceptionally committed United Nations humanitarian aid workers do their best to save lives. They help protect civilian populations from the degradations of armed militias, children from starvation and women from shameful violence.

This year did not bring a natural disaster on the scale of the 2004 tsunami, but the intensity of floods, droughts and other extreme weather, perhaps made worse by climate change, have brought pain and suffering to many millions. This, above all, is the United Nations front line. We stand up to help those who cannot help themselves.

(*spoke in French*)

I am often filled with a sense of deep humility in the face of the great challenges ahead of us. So many hopes have been placed in us, but it is our duty to respond to these hopes with perseverance, patience, courage and discipline. We must transform the way in which the United Nations does its work, the way that we work. Let us focus more on results, rather than bureaucratic procedures. The pendulum of history is swinging in our favour. Multilateralism is back. An increasingly interdependent world acknowledges that the United Nations is the best way — in fact the only way — to take up the challenges of the future.

Agenda item 8

General debate

The President: There are over 180 languages spoken in the five boroughs of New York. This cosmopolitan city really is a microcosm of the world. What better place than this to bring together at the

highest level all 192 Member States of the United Nations?

We are here today to debate the urgent challenges that our peoples and nations face collectively and individually. This is one of the rare occasions each year when so many heads of State and Government gather together in one place. What a unique opportunity. This historic Hall is indeed the parliament of the peoples of the world.

It is therefore my sincere honour and pleasure to welcome you all to the general debate. The theme for this year's debate is "Responding to Climate Change". I would also like to use this opportunity to draw your attention to the other key priorities we will work on together during the sixty-second session.

As I set out in more detail at the opening of this session, in consultations with members, I identified five priority topics that we need to address in this session: climate change, financing for development, the Millennium Development Goals, countering terrorism and renewing the management, effectiveness and coherence of the Organization, including Security Council reform. I believe that those five priorities represent an equilibrium of interests that all Member States can identify with and take forward successfully together.

Climate change and its dramatic effects are increasingly visible and increasingly violent. The irony is that those least responsible for it will suffer most. Yesterday, many participants reaffirmed that and sent a strong political message that the time for action had come. That is why I have proposed creating a comprehensive road map to guide the way forward for the United Nations system and its Member States.

First, we need to take stock to outline the instruments we have and the structures necessary to address climate change. Then, we need a clearer vision of the way forward. And finally, we must formulate a strategy to get us there together. Modernizing our management and implementing greater coherence across the system will enable the Organization to deliver better results on all the priorities I have outlined. And to make swift progress, I call on all members today to renew their support for the Secretary-General in his endeavour to advance the agenda of the United Nations and to make it more effective and modern.

Together, dealing systematically with substance, the General Assembly can demonstrate its global leadership on these important issues. To revitalize this House is also to renew our faith in each other and in the Organization's cherished values.

The basic values, norms and principles of international relations are undergoing a profound transition. This is characterized by great opportunities as well as by great challenges.

The patterns of life of individuals and communities are increasingly shaped by global economic forces. Overall, our wealth is increasing. More and more people are benefiting from the expansion of trade, commerce and new jobs in a system based on the rule of law and human rights. But for the benefits of development to be sustained, they have to be shared by all. Sharp social divisions and inequalities continue to persist. About half the world's people still live on less than two dollars per day. In a world where we are confronted by images of prosperity, the burden of the expectation of a better future is growing daily. Education, the key to empowerment, is for some more accessible. Yet, each day, 100 million young children do not receive an education. Let us spare no effort in moving the world towards a sense of genuine belonging, shared opportunity and responsibility.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is not solely a test of our ability to deliver on our promises. It is, above all, a test of our moral convictions. That is why, in consultation with the Secretary-General, I intend to work closely with members to hold an MDG leaders meeting here at the United Nations during this session.

(*spoke in French*)

In this era of globalization, we face other challenges. Capital flows are becoming more and more complex, volatile and opaque. We are increasingly vulnerable to the new threats to which we need to respond. Terrorism, arms trafficking, weapons of mass destruction, pandemics and the consequences of climate change are but a few examples. That is why I am calling upon members to take every opportunity offered to us in the course of this session to move towards sustainable peace, in particular in the Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan and Darfur.

We must rise to those challenges in this increasingly fast-paced world. Political decision-making processes can seem very slow and too cumbersome. As Ms. Al Khalifa said during the previous General Assembly session, we are facing a growing gap between the actions that we must take and the multilateral means at our disposal to do so.

(*spoke in English*)

By confronting the challenges of our time and nurturing new patterns of cooperation, we can forge a new culture of international relations, demonstrate the courage to rise above ourselves and achieve our common goals. We must act with purpose, determination and vision, all of us accepting our shared but differentiated responsibility to work together for change. If fully implemented, the commitments made at the 2005 World Summit and at other summits and conferences can create the conditions for lasting prosperity and stability based on the principles of peace and security, international development, human rights and the rule of law.

To demonstrate this and to achieve more during this session and in the future, the General Assembly should be more of a dialogue, not a monologue; it should be more engaging and insightful; it should be more focused on results and should continually strive to exemplify the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.

There is an old saying: "Keep your mind level. If the mind is level, the whole world will be level". It is my hope that that spirit will guide us in our joint efforts, not only during this session, but in the future. Acting in that manner requires us to realize that all the distinctions of the world are caused by the discriminatory views of the mind.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this morning, I should like to remind members that the list of speakers has been created on the basis that statements will have a time limit of 15 minutes per statement to enable all the speakers to be heard at any given meeting. Within this time frame, I should like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be properly provided.

I should also like to draw the General Assembly's attention to the decision made by the Assembly at previous sessions, namely, that the practice of expressing congratulations inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered are strongly discouraged. In that connection, I should like to invite speakers in the general debate after delivering their statements to exit the General Assembly Hall through room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the same manner during the general debate of the sixty-second session?

It was so decided.

The President: Finally, I should like to draw it to the attention of members that during the general debate, official photographs of speakers are taken by the Department of Public Information. Members interested in obtaining those photographs are requested to contact the Photo Library of the United Nations.

Address by Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Da Silva (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I congratulate the Secretary-General on his assumption of such a high office within the international system. I welcome his decision to encourage high-level debate on the extremely grave issue of climate change. It is most appropriate that that discussion take place here at the United Nations.

Let us not delude ourselves. If the groundwork of global development is not rebuilt, the risks of unprecedented environmental and human catastrophe will grow. We must overcome the apparently pragmatic and sophisticated notion — which is actually anachronistic, predatory and senseless — that profits and wealth can grow forever, at any cost. There are

prices that humanity cannot afford to pay at the risk of destroying the material and spiritual foundations of our collective existence — at the risk of self-destruction. The preservation of life must prevail over mindless greed.

The world will not correct its irresponsible relationship with nature, however, until we change the way development relates to social justice. If we want to salvage our common heritage, a new and more balanced distribution of wealth is needed, both internationally and within each country. Social equity is our best weapon against the planet's degradation. Each one of us must do our part. It is unacceptable that the cost of the irresponsibility of a privileged few be shouldered by the dispossessed of the Earth.

The most highly industrialized countries can and must set the example. Full compliance with their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol is indispensable. That is not enough, however. We need to set more ambitious goals for 2012 onwards and we must take strong action to ensure universal accession to the Protocol. Developing countries must also help in combating climate change. We need clear national strategies to hold Governments accountable to their peoples.

Brazil will soon launch its own national plan to combat climate change. The Amazon forest is one of the areas most vulnerable to global warming, but the threats cover all continents. They range from greater desertification to the outright disappearance of territories or even of entire countries lost to rising sea levels. Brazil has undertaken major efforts to minimize the impact of climate change. Suffice it to say that, in recent years, we have halved the rate of deforestation in the Amazon region.

Results like that should come as no surprise. Brazil will under no circumstance abdicate either its sovereignty or its responsibilities in the Amazon. Our recent achievements derive from an increasing presence of the Brazilian State in the region, fostering sustainable development with economic, social, educational and cultural benefits for its more than 20 million inhabitants.

I am convinced that our experience can enrich similar endeavours in other countries. In Nairobi, Brazil proposed the adoption of economic and financial incentives to reduce deforestation on a global scale. We must also increase South-South cooperation while promoting innovative modalities of joint action with developed countries. That is how we can materialize the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities.

It is very important to adopt an integrated political approach to the environmental agenda as a whole. Brazil hosted the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development — the Earth Summit. We need to review what has been achieved since then, and set a new course of action. I therefore propose that we hold a new Conference, in 2012, the "Rio +20" Conference to be hosted by Brazil.

We will not overcome the terrible impacts of climate change until humanity changes its patterns of energy production and consumption. The world urgently needs to develop a new energy matrix in which bio-fuels will play a vital role. Bio-fuels significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. With its increased and more efficient use of ethanol, Brazil has kept 644 million tons of carbon dioxide from being emitted into the atmosphere over the past 30 years.

Bio-fuels can be much more than a clean-energy alternative. Ethanol and bio-diesel can open up excellent opportunities for over 100 poor and developing countries in Latin America, Asia and, especially, Africa. They can enhance energy autonomy, without costly investments. They can create jobs and income and promote family farming. They can help balance trade deficits by reducing imports and generating surplus exportable crops.

Brazil's experience over three decades has shown that bio-fuel production does not affect food security. Sugarcane crops cover just 1 per cent of the country's arable land, and yields continue to rise. People do not go hungry around the world for lack of food, but rather for lack of income, which afflicts almost 1 billion men, women and children.

It is entirely possible to combine bio-fuels with environmental protection and food production. We will ensure that bio-fuel production complies with all social and environmental guarantees. Our Government has decided to implement a complete agro-ecological zoning of the country in order to identify farmland best suited to producing bio-fuels. Brazilian bio-fuels will reach the world market with a seal of assurance for their social, labour and environmental quality.

In 2008, Brazil is set to host an international conference on bio-fuels that will lay the foundations for wide-ranging global cooperation. I hereby invite all countries to participate.

Sustainable development is not just an environmental issue; it is also a social challenge. We are making Brazil less unequal and more dynamic. The country is growing again, creating jobs and distributing income. This time, opportunities are being created for all. We are paying off a centuries-old social debt, while at the same time investing heavily in quality education, science and technology.

We have honoured our commitment to "zero hunger" by sweeping away that scourge from the lives of over 45 million people. We achieved the first Millennium Development Goal 10 years ahead of schedule, cutting extreme poverty in our country by more than half. Fighting hunger and poverty should be the concern of all peoples. A global society held back by growing income disparities is simply not viable. There will be no lasting peace if we do not progressively reduce inequality.

In 2004, we launched the global Action against Hunger and Poverty. Early results are encouraging, particularly the creation of the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID). UNITAID has already achieved 45-per-cent price cuts in drugs used against AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis for the poorest countries of Africa. The time has come for us to give it a new push. We cannot allow ideas that so mobilized our countries to fade because of bureaucratic inertia.

However, the final defeat of poverty demands more than international solidarity. It depends above all on new economic relations that no longer penalize poor countries. The Doha Round of the World Trade Organization should promote a true pact for development by adopting fair and balanced rules for international trade. Farm subsidies that make the rich richer and the poor poorer are no longer acceptable. We cannot accept agricultural protectionism that perpetuates dependency and underdevelopment. Brazil will spare no effort for a successful conclusion of those negotiations, which must, above all, benefit the poorest countries.

Building a new international order is no rhetorical turn of phrase; it is a matter of common sense. Brazil is proud of its contribution to South American integration, particularly through the Common Market of the South. We are working to bring together peoples and regions. We seek to enhance political dialogue and economic links with the Arab world, Africa and Asia, and we do so without sacrificing our traditional partners. Brazil has set up an innovative cooperation mechanism with India and South Africa. Together we are working on specific projects to help in various countries, including Haiti and Guinea-Bissau.

We all agree on the need for increased participation by developing countries in the major international decision-making bodies, in particular the Security Council. The time has come to move from words to action. We appreciate recent proposals by President Sarkozy to reform the Security Council, with the inclusion of developing nations. A review of decision-making processes within international financial institutions is also required.

The United Nations is our best tool to deal with today's international challenges. It is through multilateral diplomacy that we find the way to fostering peace and development. Brazil's role alongside other Latin America and Caribbean nations in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti highlights our efforts to strengthen multilateral institutions. In Haiti, we are showing that peace and stability are built with democracy and social development.

Walking into this building, representatives to the United Nations can admire a work of art that Brazil presented to the United Nations 50 years ago. I am referring to the murals that portray war and peace painted by a great Brazilian artist, Cândido Portinari. The suffering so expressively portrayed in the mural depicting war brings to mind the United Nations crucial responsibility in containing the risk of armed conflict. The second mural reminds us that peace is much more than the absence of war. It evokes well-being, health and harmonious coexistence with nature. It calls for social justice, freedom and overcoming the scourges of hunger and poverty. It is not by mere chance that those who enter the building face the mural portraying war, while those who leave see the mural depicting peace. The artist's message is simple but powerful: transforming suffering into hope, and war into peace, is the essence of the United Nations mission. Brazil will continue to work to realize those high expectations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federal Republic of Brazil for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federal Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. George Walker Bush, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bush: Thank you for the opportunity to address the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Sixty years ago, representatives from 16 nations gathered to begin deliberations on a new international bill of rights. The document they produced is called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it stands as a landmark achievement in the history of human liberty. The Declaration opens by recognizing the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom and justice and peace in the world. As we gather for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, the standards of the Declaration must guide our work in this world.

Achieving the promise of the Declaration requires confronting long-term threats. It also requires answering the immediate needs of today.

We nations in this Hall have our differences. Yet, there are some areas where we can all agree. When innocent people are trapped in a life of murder and fear, the Declaration is not being upheld. When millions of children starve to death or perish from a mosquito bite, we are not doing our duty in the world. When whole societies are cut off from the prosperity of the global economy, we are all worse off. Changing these underlying conditions is what the Declaration calls the work of larger freedom, and it must be the work of every nation in this Assembly.

This great institution must work for great purposes, to free people from tyranny and violence, hunger and disease, illiteracy and ignorance and poverty and despair. Every member of the United Nations must join in this mission of liberation. The first mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from tyranny and violence. The first article of the Universal Declaration begins by stating that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. This truth is denied by terrorists and extremists who kill the innocent with the aim of imposing their hateful vision on humanity. The followers of this violent ideology are a threat to civilized people everywhere. All civilized nations must work together to stop them by sharing intelligence about their networks and choking off their finances and bringing to justice their operatives. In the long run, the best way to defeat extremists is to defeat their dark ideology with a more hopeful vision — the vision of liberty that founded this body.

The United States salutes the nations that have recently taken strides towards liberty, including Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritania, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Morocco. The Palestinian territories have moderate leaders — mainstream leaders — who are working to build free institutions that fight terror, enforce the law and respond to the needs of their people. The international community must support these leaders so that we can advance the vision of two democratic States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace and security.

Brave citizens in Lebanon and Afghanistan and Iraq have made the choice for democracy. Yet, the extremists have responded by targeting them for murder. This is not a show of strength; it is evidence of fear; and the extremists are doing everything within their power to bring down these young democracies. The people of Lebanon and Afghanistan and Iraq have asked for our help, and every civilized nation has a responsibility to stand with them. Every civilized nation also has a responsibility to stand up for the people suffering under dictatorship. In Belarus, North Korea, Syria and Iran, brutal regimes deny their people the fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration.

Americans are outraged by the situation in Burma, where a military junta has imposed a 19-year reign of fear. Basic freedoms of speech, assembly and worship are severely restricted. Ethnic minorities are persecuted. Forced child labour, human trafficking and rape are common. The regime is holding more than 1,000 political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party was elected overwhelmingly by the Burmese people in 1990.

The ruling junta remains unyielding, yet the people's desire for freedom is unmistakable. This morning, I am announcing a series of steps to help bring peaceful change to Burma. The United States will tighten economic sanctions on the leaders of the regime and their financial backers. We will impose an expanded visa ban on those responsible for the most egregious violations of human rights — as well as their family members. We will continue to support the efforts of humanitarian groups working to alleviate suffering in Burma. And I urge the United Nations and all nations to use their diplomatic and economic leverage to help the Burmese people reclaim their freedom.

In Cuba, the long rule of a cruel dictator is nearing its end. The Cuban people are ready for their freedom. And as that nation enters a period of transition, the United Nations must insist on free speech, free assembly and, ultimately, free and competitive elections.

In Zimbabwe, ordinary citizens suffer under a tyrannical regime. The Government has cracked down on peaceful calls for reform and has forced millions to flee their homeland. The behaviour of the Mugabe regime is an assault on its people and an affront to the principles of the Universal Declaration. The United Nations must insist on change in Harare and must insist on freedom for the people of Zimbabwe.

In Sudan, innocent civilians are suffering repression; and in the Darfur region, many are losing their lives to genocide. America has responded with tough sanctions against those responsible for the violence. We have provided more than $2 billion in humanitarian and peacekeeping aid. I look forward to attending a Security Council meeting that will focus on Darfur, chaired by the French President. I appreciate France's leadership in helping to stabilize Sudan's neighbours. The United Nations must answer this challenge to conscience and live up to its promise to promptly deploy peacekeeping forces to Darfur.

Secondly, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from hunger and disease. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care. Around the world, the United Nations is carrying out noble efforts to live up to these words.

Feeding the hungry has long been a special calling for my nation. Today, more than half the world's food assistance comes from America. We send emergency food stocks to starving people, from camps in Sudan to slums around the world. I have proposed an innovative initiative to alleviate hunger under which America would purchase the crops of local farmers in Africa and elsewhere, rather than shipping in food from the developed world. This would help build up local agriculture and break the cycle of famine in the developing world, and I urge our United States Congress to support this initiative.

Many in this Hall are bringing the spirit of generosity to fighting HIV/AIDS and malaria. Five years ago, in sub-Saharan Africa, an AIDS diagnosis was widely considered a death sentence, and fewer than 50,000 people infected with the virus were receiving treatment. The world responded by creating the Global Fund, which is working with Governments and the private sector to fight the disease around the world. The United States decided to take these efforts a step further by launching the $15 billion Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Since 2003, this effort has helped bring cutting-edge medicines to more than a million people in sub-Saharan Africa. It is a good start. So earlier this year, I proposed to double our initial commitment — to $30 billion. By coming together, the world can turn the tide against HIV/AIDS, once and for all.

Malaria is another common killer. In some countries, malaria takes as many lives as HIV/AIDS, the vast majority of them children under the age of five. Every one of these deaths is unnecessary, because the disease is preventable and treatable. The world knows what it takes to stop malaria — bed nets, indoor spraying and medicine to treat the disease. Two years ago, America launched a $1.2 billion malaria initiative. Other nations and the private sector are making vital

contributions as well. I call on every Member State to maintain its focus, to find new ways to join this cause and to bring us closer to the day when deaths caused by malaria are no more.

Thirdly, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from the chains of illiteracy and ignorance. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration states that everyone has the right to education. When nations make the investments needed to educate their people, the whole world benefits. Better education unleashes the talent and potential of citizens and adds to the prosperity of all of us. Better education promotes better health and greater independence. Better education increases the strength of democracy and weakens the appeal of violent ideologies. So the United States is joining with nations around the world to help them provide a better education for their people.

A good education starts with good teachers. In partnership with other nations, America has helped train more than 600,000 teachers and administrators. A good education requires good textbooks. So, in partnership with other nations, America has distributed tens of millions of textbooks. A good education requires access to good schools. So, in partnership with other nations, America is helping nations raise standards in their schools at home and providing scholarships to help students come to schools in the United States. And in all our education efforts, our nation is working to expand access for women and girls so that the opportunity to get a decent education is open to all.

Finally, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from poverty and despair. Article 23 of the Universal Declaration states that everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment and to just and favourable conditions of work. In the twenty-first century, this requires ensuring that people in poor countries have the same opportunity to benefit from the global economy that citizens of wealthy countries have.

The United Nations provides vital economic assistance designed to help developing nations grow their economies and reach their potential. The United States agrees with that position. We have dramatically increased our own development assistance, and we are delivering that aid in innovative ways. We started the Millennium Challenge Account to reward nations that govern justly, fight corruption, invest in their people and promote economic freedom. With this aid, we are reaching out to developing nations in partnership, not paternalism. And we are ensuring that our aid dollars reach those who need them and achieve results.

In the long run, the best way to lift people out of poverty is through trade and investment. A nation that is open and trading with the world will create economic rewards that far exceed anything it could get through foreign aid. During the 1990s, developing nations that significantly lowered tariffs saw their per capita income grow about three times faster than other developing countries. Open markets ignite growth, encourage investment, increase transparency, strengthen the rule of law and help countries help themselves.

The international community now has a historic chance to open markets around the world by concluding a successful Doha Round of trade talks. A successful Doha outcome would mean real and substantial openings in agriculture, goods and services, and real and substantial reductions in trade-distorting subsidies. The world's largest trading nations, including major developing countries, have a special responsibility to make the tough political decisions to reduce trade barriers. America has the will and flexibility to make those necessary decisions. Our negotiators are demonstrating that spirit in Geneva. I urge other leaders to direct their negotiators to do the same. And I am optimistic that we can reach a good Doha agreement and seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity.

In the meantime, America will continue to pursue agreements that open trade and investment wherever we can. We recently signed free-trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, Panama and South Korea. These agreements embody the values of open markets, transparent and fair regulation, respect for private property and resolving disputes under rules of international law. These are good agreements. They are now ready for a congressional vote, and I urge our Congress to approve them as soon as possible.

As America works with the United Nations to alleviate immediate needs, we are also coming together to address longer-term challenges. Together, we are preparing for pandemics that could cause death and suffering on a global scale. Together, we are working to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Together, we are confronting the

challenges of energy security, environmental quality and climate change. I appreciate the discussions on climate change led by the Secretary-General last night. I look forward to further discussions at the meeting of major economies in Washington later this week.

The goals I have outlined today cannot be achieved overnight, and they cannot be achieved without reform of this vital institution. The United States is committed to a strong and vibrant United Nations. Yet the American people are disappointed by the failures of the Human Rights Council. That body has been silent on repression by regimes from Havana and Caracas to Pyongyang and Tehran, while focusing its criticism excessively on Israel. To be credible on human rights in the world, the United Nations must first reform its own Human Rights Council.

Some have also called for reform of the structure of the Security Council, including an expansion of its membership. The United States is open to this prospect. We believe that Japan is well qualified for permanent membership on the Security Council and that other nations should be considered as well. The United States will listen to all good ideas, and we will support changes to the Security Council as part of broader United Nations reform. And in all we do, I call on Member States to work for an institution that adheres to strict ethical standards and lives up to the high principles of the Universal Declaration.

With the commitment and courage of those in this Hall, we can build a world where people are free to speak, assemble and worship as they wish — a world where children in every nation grow up healthy, get a decent education and look to the future with hope — a world where opportunity crosses every border. America will lead towards that vision, in which all are created equal and free to pursue their dreams. That is the founding conviction of my country. It is the promise that established this body. And, with our determination, it can be the future of our world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kufuor (Ghana): Permit me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. The Assembly is certainly the richer for the wealth of diplomatic experience that you bring to the job.

Yesterday there was a vibrant debate in this Hall on the critical issue of climate change, which is a main theme of this year's session. The phenomenon of consensus among contributors portends catastrophic impact on the whole globe, but more especially on poor countries, which are least equipped financially and technologically to adapt in a sustained manner. Since it is generally accepted that the threat is universal, it is Ghana's considered view that the United Nations should be vested with the authority to fashion a full-fledged agency equipped with the necessary scientific and technological resources to study the problem globally and to focus on where and when it is going to occur so that, through the organization, such places can be prepared, with due warning and relief, to adapt to the impact.

Leaving the problem to individual nations, especially in the developing world, cannot be the way forward. There should be shared responsibility, even if various solutions are sought. In any case, this menace must be tackled on an emergency basis by the Organization and all its Member nations, individually and collectively, for humanity's survival.

On 6 March 2007, Ghana celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its independence as a sovereign nation. Ghanaians were overwhelmed by the incredible level of goodwill from well-wishers around the world. Permit me to use this occasion to convey Ghana's heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the members of the Assembly and, indeed, to the rest of the world for the

singular solidarity displayed to us on that occasion. May all the peoples of the world become one and be at peace with each other.

In line with its independence ideal of freedom of justice and a jubilant spirit of renewal, Ghana has rededicated itself to respect for human rights, democracy, good governance and sound economy to enable its people to develop their full potential for sustained national development.

Again, recalling its role in Africa's liberation struggle against colonialism and apartheid, Ghana has once more committed itself to working in harmony and union with sister African nations and also in partnership with the global community, as far as it is feasible, to end years of impunity, exploitation and bad governance, which have undermined the economic growth and development of the continent. Henceforth, all energies should be directed at empowering the continent through accountable and transparent governance, economic growth and sustainable development to enable it to tackle the myriad problems that afflict it and to facilitate its launching into mainstream globalization.

In July this year, Ghana had the honour of hosting the ninth Ordinary Session of the Summit of the African Union in Accra. The sole agenda of the Summit was to stage a grand debate in search of a continental union government to accelerate the growth and development of Africa and its peoples in a sustained manner. After very frank and fruitful deliberations, the Summit firmly resolved to launch certain necessary steps towards achieving that laudable objective.

To pave the way, the Summit continues to place high priority on the resolution and prevention of conflicts within and among member nations. The African Union Peace and Security Council is tasked to develop a robust and dependable security architecture on the continent, including the setting up of an African standby force as soon as possible. Those initiatives, which are supported by the international community, have already helped to reduce significantly the high incidence of armed conflicts, which have been common on the continent over the past four decades.

In line with our concerted efforts to restore peace and stability in Africa, the prevailing crises in the Darfur region of the Sudan and in Somalia and the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict must be resolved. Similarly, measures to consolidate peace in countries that are emerging from conflict, such as Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, must be substantially supported by the Organization and the international community to avoid a relapse.

To that end, we commend the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission, whose first annual report (A/62/137) highlights the challenges associated with post-conflict reconstruction and development of countries such as Sierra Leone and Burundi. As a member and a Vice-Chair, Ghana will work diligently with other members to achieve the goals of the Commission.

We also welcome Security Council resolution 1769 (2007), authorizing the deployment of a hybrid operation in Darfur, with the consent of the Government of the Sudan, and call for its speedy implementation within the agreed time frame. Here, we acknowledge the tireless joint efforts of the African Union and the Security Council, which finally got the Government of the Sudan and the Darfur warring factions to resume dialogue.

We also recognize the special initiative being taken by Secretary-General Ban and the Libyan leader, Brother Muammar Al-Qadhafi, to get the remaining warring factions to join the dialogue in order to achieve full-scale and rounded negotiations.

Meanwhile, the ongoing peace initiative in Somalia is proving extremely challenging and well beyond the capacity of the African Union alone. We are therefore calling for the concerted and timely support of the United Nations. In that respect, we urge the Organization to consider the African Union's request for financial, logistical and technical support towards the full and effective deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). That will be within the letter and spirit of Security Council resolution 1772 (2007), adopted in August 2007. It will enable Member States, such as Ghana, which have pledged to contribute troops to do so. A contingency plan for the possible deployment of a United Nations force to replace AMISOM by next February must also be developed.

Decidedly, Africa is making progress, with improvement in the macromanagement of many African economies. Average gross domestic product growth has increased steadily, from 5.2 per cent in

2005 to 5.7 per cent in 2006 to the current 6 per cent, which is expected to be sustained or even exceeded in coming years. Africa is therefore more than ready for good business. This is evidenced by the increasing interest shown by both local and foreign investors. In the mean time, the African Union's agency, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), is seriously engaged in studying viable projects that should prove strategic to opening up the entire continent and its economy for accelerated developments. Energy, communications and infrastructure development rank highly in this.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is also a NEPAD creation. The Mechanism has already proven helpful in deepening respect for human rights and democracy, as well as transparent and accountable governance. Indeed, as more countries voluntarily subscribe to it, the Mechanism's real value as a creative and ingenious process for addressing many of the root causes of conflict is becoming evident. The General Assembly's decision to endorse NEPAD as a framework for cooperation with the African Union is, therefore, timely and appreciated.

There has been a general improvement in the relationships between Africa and the various developed parts of the world and regional blocs. This is reflected in various initiatives including the Millennium Challenge Account and the African Growth and Opportunity Act of the United States of America; the African, Caribbean and Pacific agreements with the European Union; the Tokyo International Conference on African Development with Japan; the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation; the Indo-Africa Forum for Cooperation and the Africa-Brazil forum, among many others.

Despite this trend, however, there is still a serious gap in official development assistance. This must be bridged quickly to enable struggling African nations to attain the Millennium Development Goals. The developed partners are, therefore, urged to fulfil their pledges.

On the world trade talks, we urge them to commit seriously to the aid-for-trade appeal as a critical principle in the Doha Round. Similarly, on the proposed economic partnership agreement, the European Union should agree to relax the timeline for conclusion. They should also agree to review timelines for trade barriers and procurement, given that the rather weak economies of many African, Caribbean and Pacific nations might not be able to withstand the shocks of implementation in the short to medium term without some adjustment.

The Secretary-General's proposal to establish the Office for Disarmament Affairs within the Secretariat to be part of the decision-making process is timely, owing to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the menace of terrorism. In many places in the world, these dangers together constitute the real weapons of mass destruction. Ghana welcomes initiatives like the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the establishment of the Department of Field Support. The latter initiative will not only reduce the work of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations but will also help to promote its efficiency, accountability and transparency.

The General Assembly's approval of the overhaul of the system of administration of justice at the United Nations, for the first time in 60 years is also long overdue and commendable. However, Ghana urges the Organization to reflect also on mechanisms for the enforcement of the judgments of the International Court of Justice.

Conflicts, particularly those in the developing world, have consistently undermined policies to improve the circumstances of our peoples. Sustainable development can be achieved only in an international environment of peace and security. The United Nations remains the main and the best multilateral instrument available for guaranteeing such an environment and for promoting fruitful international cooperation, especially in this era of globalization. All its Member States should, therefore, be committed unequivocally to its ideals and purposes.

To conclude, permit me once again to wish the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Godspeed during his tenure and to assure him of Ghana's continued cooperation and support.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: May I request that the members of delegations who are conducting informal bilateral

exchanges in the General Assembly Hall to carry out such contacts outside the Hall in deference of the speakers. Please be seated before the next speaker takes the floor.

Address by Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nazarbayev (*spoke in Russian*): I want to invite us all to take a short journey down memory lane and recall that in 1946 the United Nations General Assembly, convened for the very first time, by its very first decision established a Committee to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy.

Almost nothing has happened since that time to allay the fears of humankind. On the contrary, the race to possess nuclear weapons, which even terrorist organizations have now joined, has continued unabated. Even though the community of nations has long recognized the need to reform the international security system, there has been no real progress.

The lack of an international consensus on the issue has led to a dramatic weakening of the collective security system. Speaking in general terms, we are dealing with a systemic crisis of international governability, and the international community is running out of legitimate levers capable of stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Quite apart from any ethical, economic or other such considerations, we need to erect legal barriers to stop proliferation. For this reason, Kazakhstan proposes that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should be adapted to accommodate the new realities.

It should be acknowledged that the NPT has become an asymmetrical agreement under which sanctions are applicable only to non-nuclear States. Yet, if nuclear Powers call for the development of nuclear weapons to be banned, they themselves should set an example by reducing and renouncing their nuclear arsenals. That is not the case. This unfairness is an inducement for those States that still aspire to acquire weapons of mass destruction. I would only add that, to our way of thinking, this aspiration is irrational.

The people of Kazakhstan have lived through all the horrors of the effects of nuclear explosions. Four hundred and fifty-six such explosions were conducted at the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground.

It was for this reason that the first milestone decision taken by Kazakhstan after gaining its independence was to shut down the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site. That was followed by the renunciation of its nuclear missile arsenal, the fourth largest in the world, and the dismantling of its infrastructure. I want to note here that at that time we had not only the trained personnel but also practically all means for delivery of nuclear warheads.

Those steps have shaped the strategy of our State in the area of global security. For the first time in human history, a nation possessing destructive force has given it up voluntarily.

I am sure that by taking that action Kazakhstan established trust in the world. Thanks to that step, the country has witnessed an inflow of considerable investment that has become the foundation for impressive achievements in development known today throughout the world. By taking that step, we consolidated our independence, having received security assurances from all nuclear-weapon States. I have a question for others: why not follow our example, instead of wasting astounding amounts on the arms race?

Over recent years, international terrorism has significantly undermined world security. International drug trafficking serves as a financial pillar of terrorism. Today, the international drug industry accounts for a third of the annual volume of the "economy of terrorism". It is a well-established fact that terrorism finds fertile ground in unstable and poor countries. We have such a country in our region, Afghanistan. That country is driving an ever-growing trade in drugs.

Poor countries need the assistance of developed nations. They need assistance that would give tangible

results. Thanks to a thriving economy, our country, until recently a foreign aid recipient, has joined the group of "new donors". Over the last few years, Kazakhstan has seen its economy grow at an annual rate of some 10 per cent. And now we are in a position to help our neighbours.

We are concerned with the difficulties in the process of reconstruction of Iraq and the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan. The peoples of our region, like the entire international community, count on a peaceful solution of the so-called crisis around Iran. The best way to achieve that is for Iran, whose people have a great history and culture, to prove the peaceful character of its nuclear programme.

Today, the peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations remain the most effective instrument for the peaceful settlement of regional crises. Fifteen years ago, from this rostrum, Kazakhstan put forward an initiative related to the enhancement of the Organization's peacekeeping potential. We proposed the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping fund, with States voluntarily contributing 1 per cent of their military budgets.

That idea has been supported by the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has proposed to redirect 1 per cent of global military spending to development. I believe that such a decision would constitute an important step towards the implementation of the United Nations strategy to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Allow me now to draw the Assembly's attention to a number of issues that are important in the context of Kazakhstan's cooperation with the United Nations and its Member States.

First, Kazakhstan welcomes the decision by the General Assembly to identify problems involving climate change as a priority theme of the current session.

In this context, I would like to draw attention to our initiative put forward at the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, by reiterating our proposal to establish, within the framework of the United Nations, a register of global environmental problems. Such an instrument would help us to develop mechanisms for addressing environmental disasters.

By the 1990s, the Aral Sea, once a large inland sea, had lost three fourths of its water. That spelled disaster for millions of people living around it. The salt from the exposed seabed is being sprinkled on the entire Eurasian continent, damaging its environment. The countries of the Central Asian region have done much to rehabilitate the sea. However, without consolidation of the efforts of the world community, this problem cannot be solved. As I did at the 2002 Earth Summit, I again propose to give to the international fund to save the Aral Sea the status of a United Nations institution.

Secondly, a deepening global energy crisis and the growing threat of negative climate changes taking place on our planet present acute problems for the world community. We share the concern of the leaders of the Group of Eight (G-8) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries over these problems. It is advisable that we develop, within the framework of the United Nations, a global energy and environment strategy and discuss it at the 2012 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Thirdly, Kazakhstan forms part of the Caspian region, which is playing a growing role in international energy markets. As of today, Kazakhstan has the world's seventh largest reserves of oil, the sixth largest reserves of gas and the second largest deposits of uranium.

By 2017, Kazakhstan will be among the world's 10 largest oil producers and exporters. Kazakhstan is also increasing its gas production. Possessing large deposits of uranium, we will be playing an important role in the development of the nuclear energy sector. That said, Kazakhstan is fully aware of its share of responsibility for ensuring a global energy balance and security.

To promote further diversification of energy delivery to consumers and also to provide assurances to energy producers, Kazakhstan proposes the adoption of a Eurasian pact on stability of energy delivery.

Fourthly, the first-ever global United Nations conference on problems faced by landlocked developing countries, hosted by Kazakhstan in 2003, adopted an international document, the Almaty Programme of Action. We believe that it will facilitate effective assistance to that group of countries. Decisions on the development of regional cooperation and transport and transit infrastructure adopted at the latest session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held in Kazakhstan last May,

have become an important and logical step in the same direction.

Fifthly, speaking of Asia, we must mention here the issue of the establishment of a continental arrangement for collective security. That has become possible through the implementation of Kazakhstan's initiative to convene the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), announced by me from this very podium, during the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly in 1992. Today, the CICA process brings together 18 States, which occupy 90 per cent of Asia's territory. Their population makes up half of the people living on our planet. Time has proven the relevance of the CICA process, within which a political dialogue among Asian States is gaining momentum.

Sixthly, we support joint efforts to reform United Nations activities. In our view, the Security Council should be enlarged in the categories of both permanent and non-permanent members and on the basis of equitable geographical representation and respect for the sovereign equality of States. The working methods of the Security Council should also be reformed in order to increase its transparency and accountability. The General Assembly should play a central role as the main deliberative, decision-making and representative body of the United Nations.

Most of the sensational predictions of an inevitable "clash of civilizations," fortunately, have not yet been accurate. However, we should be clear that interfaith tension feeds the social basis of international terrorism and religious extremism. I believe that seeking an accord between religions and the peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups is a crucially important element in the process of maintaining international security.

Kazakhstan, a home to 130 ethnic groups representing 45 religions, has set an example of tolerance, which has become a decisive factor in efforts to ensure peace, stability and the economic progress of Kazakhstan.

Conscious of the critical importance of a dialogue between world religions on key issues of the modern world order, Kazakhstan hosted, in 2003 and 2006, forums of leaders of world and traditional religions where religious opinion makers were trying to find not only a language of mutual understanding but also mechanisms for easing interfaith tensions in the planet's hot spots.

I propose that the Third Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, scheduled for 2009, be convened under the auspices of the United Nations. I also propose the proclamation of one of the coming years as an international year of convergence of cultures and religions.

Just days after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, Pope John Paul II visited our country. He said that that tragic event should not become a cause for confrontation between religions. I strongly believe that there are no problems in the world that cannot be solved if we set harmony, tolerance and spirituality against animosity, relying on mutual trust and cooperation. That understanding instils hope and enhances confidence in the future.

The United Nations plays a special role in the strengthening of those hopes. We are not sceptical about the legitimacy of international law and have faith in the effectiveness of such multilateral mechanisms as the United Nations in the promotion of security and fairness. We are against attempts to weaken our Organization. Kazakhstan associates itself with those States that are willing to strengthen the role and authority of the United Nations because they view it as the only international body capable of influencing, in an effective way, the issues of war and peace.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, President of the Republic of Honduras

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Manuel Zelaya

Rosales, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zelaya Rosales (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has done a laudable job, thus enhancing the prestige of the United Nations.

I am here on behalf of the people of Honduras, who have entrusted to me the torch of Central American peace so that I can hold high in the Assembly Hall this light that illuminates understanding among peoples and nations.

Honduras is filled with a spirit of hope. Today we have the best social and economic indicators of recent decades. We have an average economic growth of more than 7 per cent. We have very good results in the area of job creation. We have begun to speed up poverty reduction by more than 6 per cent in 18 months. We have reduced forest fires by 40 per cent, together with illegal logging and the advance of migratory agriculture and extensive ranching. We now have a climate conducive to public and private enterprise. We are beginning to strictly implement the transparency law as a civic instrument to provide better access to public information.

We have already presented, during the recently concluded sixty-first session of this very special forum, the Assembly of the people, our demands, our proposals and a reaffirmation of our values. Most of the people of Honduras believe in democracy and social liberalism, and in a free-market economy in its true meaning, as a useful instrument for the equitable trade of commodities — the fruits of human labour.

However, in actual practice — the only possible means of testing our theories — international trade operates in an unequal and inequitable way, as do the relations between powerful and economically weak countries. Free trade, so highly touted in all our speeches and international propaganda may, if we do not redirect it properly, turn into yet another ruse disguising unequal relations, the unjust distribution of advantages and the undue, invisible code of unfair and discriminatory competition.

Let us just look at the figures of the World Trade Organization, which acknowledge that barely 7 per cent of international trade goes through free channels and the free market of economic and transparent rules. The rest, that is, more than 90 per cent of global trade, takes place outside the scope of the illusory standards of liberty and justice that we all aspire to.

We must remedy this situation. Now is the time. We must continue to establish the conditions to improve international agreements. I acknowledge that we are competing in imperfect markets with unequal rules of the game, which provide advantages and disadvantages. Some receive all kinds of subsidies and preferential tariffs, which transform their products into privileged goods. Speculative pricing, dumping, monopolies, oligopolies and other discriminatory practices are promoted, and certain parties are able to advance their interests and impose their will on those of us who are struggling just to reach the threshold of development.

We demand that the rules of true free trade and competition be respected. We do not want to be relegated to the basement of history. Our peoples have the right to reach the summits of prosperity.

One of the most obvious and classic examples of this problem, which is worth mentioning in this Assembly, is the excessive charges and increased tariffs imposed by the European market on the bananas from our region. A similar example is the recent revision request from the United States that we impose new tariffs on products and on the sale of textiles and finished fabrics that Honduras exports to the United States market. This weakens the spirit of the trade rules we signed barely a year ago and would affect Honduras' sales to the United States market — a market that investors in our country have gained by dint of hard work, competing in order to sell at the best price and to sell goods of better quality.

As the Assembly can see, we are not coming here to ask for the impossible or to demand what is not owed to us. We simply want to go on record in expressing our just and necessary demand for equitable treatment in trade relations in the international market. We are not asking for sympathy or pious condescension. We are asking for respect. We want people to pay a proper price for our products and to value our effort and work with the same criterion that is used to rate the effort of other peoples and other communities that produce goods and services. We demand equitable rules and standards. We require the just treatment that we deserve as authentic and real members of this planet that we all share.

Likewise, we would like to mention in the Assembly a problem that almost all of us are experiencing. We are suffering the same fate because of speculative increases in the international markets in the price of oil and its derivatives. Barely five years ago, the price of a barrel of oil was about $13; today it is already above $80 a barrel. It has increased by a dramatic 600 per cent, thus subjecting our nations to a state of greater dependence and international destitution.

The economies of our countries cannot withstand this economic blood-letting, which destroys any attempt for social protection. A large part of what we can invest in order to combat illness, ignorance, hunger and age-old backwardness now drains to the large transnational oil corporations. While we are fighting to reduce poverty and its ills — ills caused by those who claim to be free of all blame and responsibility — the masters of the world and of trade are increasing prices to indecent scales as instruments of pressure with the rise of oil.

We are appealing to the global conscience to share urgent efforts to intervene in the extreme speculation in oil prices. We need to establish mutual cooperation in order to produce forms of alternative energy without it becoming a new opportunity to come up with low- or high-intensity wars that only threaten the sovereign rights and the right to strengthen peace of the democracies of the world.

These are the contrasts of the modern world. Paradoxically, while borders are opening up to speculation, abuse and free trade in commodities, they are closing to people, especially to emigrants. The lack of ethical limits of a society of unfettered consumption produces false expectations among young people in developing countries. Bombarded by alienating propaganda, illusions are created that later turn into urgent economic needs, producing diasporas compelled by the famous pursuit of the American dream.

There is no better opportunity than this universal forum to expand on a theme that concerns all of us — countries of origin as well as receiving countries. It is impossible to measure the drama of the emigrant experience, the modern self-exiles that go from place to place in search of better opportunities.

Honduras, my country, is a multi-ethnic and multiracial society and full of immigrants. My country throughout its history has been a territory of passage and a refuge for foreign migrants and a centre which has produced its own emigrants looking for a better life in far-off places. This triple status as a country of origin, a receiving country and a country of transit is what gives us the moral authority to talk about this topic with the necessary correctness and firmness, but also with indispensable feeling and solidarity.

To be an emigrant is not to commit a crime. Migration has not been and should never be considered a crime or threat, but rather a human right. Migration does not belong to nor should it be included in the security agenda of any country. That was done only in the time of fascism. It should be included and considered within the framework where it really belongs, that is, the development agenda of our countries. In this way, we would no longer witness the monstrous spectacle of inhuman persecution simply because people are migrants, undocumented aliens, pursued and humiliated. Emigration is a right, a simple and basic human right.

Those who see the problem of migration simply from the point of view of family remittances or voting by emigrants abroad are committing a serious and short-sighted error. They are wrong to look at the phenomenon of growing migratory flows in the world in this way. The problem is complex and difficult. It is related to the economic structure of the country that produces emigrants — political problems, natural disasters, war, violence, poverty, unemployment. Migration weakens the social cohesion of the country that produces emigrants, facilitates outflows of share capital and stimulates the fleeing of manpower at its most productive and hard-working stage. It empties communities, impedes the processes of democracy and generates unfavourable conditions because of which this wonderful working force is compelled to leave.

Migration is a very complex and contradictory social phenomenon that deserves serious scientific treatment, beyond simple emotions and feelings. Immigrants are people who are simply looking for better market opportunities in order to sell the only thing they have: their power to work, their energy, and their boundless desire to overcome their poverty and set out on the road to prosperity and well-being, which are basic elements of life. They are human beings who deserve to be treated as such and to enjoy the basic respect that humans should enjoy. They want us to recognize their rights and to give them responsibilities, to value and consider them in what they represent, and

to see them for what they are: a productive and mobile human force that is vital and beneficial both to the economy that they serve and to the economy of their country of origin.

I propose that we provide a legal basis, a fair and legal international framework to ensure that immigration becomes an ordered phenomenon beneficial to all. I propose that we seek consensus, reach agreement and establish the necessary international cooperation. Our world needs immigrants and I implore its representatives, in the name of mercy and justice, to help stop the shameful persecution of immigrants. We must apply the law of family reunification. It is God's will that the families of immigrants be reunified.

All of us in Central America, Mexico and Latin America deeply regret the fact that we have seen no progress on the corresponding legislative initiative that the President of the United States submitted to the United States Congress. We know that he did so with the best of wills, and we therefore believe that President Bush should not falter in promoting that proposal. The construction of a wall can only separate us. We must find other mechanisms to resolve the problem. Halting the mass deportations and reunifying families would be a gesture highly appreciated in national and international public opinion. We also recognize the work of various Governments, in particular the efforts of President Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain, who has reached immigration agreements and quotas with various countries.

Just as the Kyoto Protocol protects biological life on the planet, the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantee life and peace in our societies. Let us ensure that they are implemented.

We express solidarity with peoples who are fighting for their identity, and reaffirm our support for the Republic of Taiwan in its efforts to achieve recognition in this forum of nations, in its fight for independence, and in its constructive and faithful dedication to the many development processes under way in Central American countries.

Central America and Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Belize and the Dominican Republic are united by the dreams of Francisco Morazán, the champion of Central America, a region of leaders in contemporary continental thought and artists of stature throughout Latin America and the world, the belt of the Americas and a bridge to the world, in the words of General Omar Torrijos. Through me, they offer a fraternal and united invitation to visit. We have every facility. We have the most beautiful places on the planet, with great potential in such areas as tourism, bio-energy, telecommunications, agriculture and the environment.

We cannot remain passive or inactive in the face of social despair. Our lives are replete with dreams. We must, where necessary, overcome the neglect to which the developing world is subject. Our great poet and thinker, Alfonso Guillén Zelaya, said that we certainly cannot control fate. Prometheus always has to find someone to liberate him if civilization is to move forward. It is not possible for humankind to come to an end of its history without first giving the most disadvantaged peoples of the world the opportunity to live.

We trust in the future. Humankind knows that hope is not lost and has full confidence in the principles of the infinite god of love who guides us, and not in the god of violence, whom we reject. Before this Assembly, we express the fervent wish for peace in the world, a new dawn for humankind in which everything would be different and our energies would focus on serving human beings and not on trade.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Emir of the State of Qatar.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Thani (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I wish you every success in your mission. I would like also to thank your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for successfully presiding over the previous session.

I would like further to pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has assumed his post at a critical moment in which the Organization is facing several serious challenges that threaten international peace and security.

The current session has begun at a time when more than one fifth of the world's population of Muslims are observing mandatory fasting during the month of Ramadan. We were eager to participate in the activities of this session being held in this holy month in order to stress our conviction in the need to contribute to promoting coexistence among nations and to raise an important issue related to the purposes of the international community with respect to the future of peace and progress.

Given its great significance, I would like to refer to Security Council resolution 1770 (2007), on the subject of Iraq, which was adopted on 10 August 2007. That resolution has partly restored to the United Nations its rightful role in addressing Iraq's tragedy, after it was proven that it is no longer possible for that matter to remain confined to a single State or to a coalition of States of converging interests.

The world's major conflicts have become far too big for a single Power to handle them on its own. Responsibility for addressing them should therefore be placed with the United Nations, as it constitutes the political embodiment of the international community's principles, laws and broad aspirations to peacebuilding and to achieving progress on the basis of the rule of law and the will of those upholding its authority. If the role of the United Nations is to be more effective, its structure must be reformed to adapt to the changes that have taken place in the world since the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations, in 1945.

While the current situation in Iraq requires that the international community assume its responsibilities, the main responsibility remains with the leaders of the whole Iraqi people, who are primarily responsible for hammering out a formula of national reconciliation that ensures justice, peace and security and preserves the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

The international order has witnessed both "cold" and actual wars. Although real wars are humanly unacceptable, cold wars are psychologically unbearable because they inevitably lead to proxy conflicts, which are incompatible with a world in which the forces of enlightenment and the elements of understanding among nations and cultures have strived in an unprecedented manner.

The work of the United Nations in the areas of development should be accorded high priority, given the close links that exist between development, security and peace. We were indeed pleased that the General Assembly approved the initiative of the State of Qatar to host the first follow-up conference to the International Conference on Financing for Development, which is to be held at Doha during the second half of 2008.

One of the major challenges that we all have to address pertains to the protection of the environment. In addition to the destructive effects of climate change, the environment is subject to degradation and pollution, which threaten human life as well as that of all living creatures. Such a situation requires both our cooperation and concerted efforts by industrialized and developing countries alike to find new approaches and visions leading to effective short-, mid- and long-term solutions. In that connection, I would like to underscore my country's support for any measures aimed at protecting the environment and achieving sustainable development.

International aid is one of the areas for promoting international partnership. The volume of aid should therefore be increased and its efficiency improved by easing the conditions on which it is granted so as to promote the national development strategies of recipient countries. In that regard, we are concerned about the decline in 2006 of the real value of official development assistance. Donors should make additional efforts to double the assistance provided to sub-Saharan African countries and to promote the development agenda of the United Nations.

Moreover, given the important, major role played by global trade in financing development, a successful conclusion to the Doha Round would provide new opportunities to promote multilateral trade transactions. While we are concerned about the

deadlock in the ongoing consultations on the implementation of the Doha Development Agenda, we hope that we will be able to put that phase behind us. We also hope that all parties concerned, especially developed countries, will show the sufficient flexibility to reach mutually beneficial, practical results.

I have not come to this session to present issues or crises related to my country or the Arab world, although some of them have reached proportions constituting human tragedies. I have come here to raise broader issues, as I am convinced that all Arab and Muslim issues are related to the problems of the world as a whole. In the light of a global understanding of the new phase in international progress — an understanding that emphasizes the belief in the need to resort to the collective international will, as embodied by the United Nations, its leadership and system, and in the set of principles on which the Organization's Charter is based — Arab and Muslim causes would not be the only ones to benefit from it; it would also benefit the entire world. Just causes are always protected by the principles of the law, and the law provides their true guarantee, as well as powerful support.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Emir of the State of Qatar for the statement he has just made.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sarkozy (*spoke in French*): To all the peoples represented here, I convey the brotherly greetings of France. Mr. Secretary-General, you have an enormous responsibility, and you have the trust of France.

This is the first time that I address this Assembly on behalf of France. It is a solemn and moving moment for me. I cannot help thinking of all of those men and women who, at one of the most tragic moments in the history of humanity, as the world stood on the brink of barbarity, finding that prospect intolerable, succeeded in countering force and violence and barbarity with justice and peace. Thus was the United Nations born.

The United Nations is not a mere political construct. It is not a mere legal construct. It is an awakening of the human conscience against everything that threatens to destroy humanity.

I have never believed that the United Nations could one day root out the violence that lies within human beings. But what I do know deep down inside me, what we all know deep down, is that in spite of all its failures, without the United Nations it would have been impossible to put an end to conflicts that seemed to be insoluble. Remember the genocide of the Cambodian people, remember the suffering inflicted upon them; remember the independence of Namibia; remember the independence of Timor. Look at the Great Lakes region, or West Africa. Without the United Nations, the world might have experienced a third world war, doubtless even more terrible than the two previous ones.

France is convinced that the United Nations is the only remedy we have for the blindness and folly that sometimes take hold of human beings.

The message I wish to bring to you in the name of France is a simple one: in this world where the fate of each of us depends on the fate of others, the United Nations should not be weakened; the United Nations must be strengthened. Reforming the United Nations so as to adapt it to the realities of our world is an absolute priority for France. We cannot afford to wait any longer. The world's problems must be addressed and resolved globally. No one on this Earth can alone protect themselves from the consequences of climate warming, the clash of civilizations, major epidemics. Against selfishness, against fanaticism, against hatred, it is our duty to renew that appeal to the universal conscience by virtue of which, for the first time in the history of all the peoples of the world, all nations agreed to meet within a common forum in order to set aside what divides us and talk to one another.

This appeal to the universal conscience is an appeal for peace. It is an appeal for open-mindedness. It is an appeal for diversity. And it is an appeal for justice. France has always sought greatness for the sake of men and women, not for its own sake. Like all nations, France, in the course of its long history, has made mistakes, and has sometimes been at fault. But its people, the people of France, have always chosen to be on the side of freedom and democracy. France is loyal to its friends and to the values it shares with them. But this loyalty is not submission. This loyalty is not a shackle. And France intends to draw on that loyalty in the cause of openness to others, of openness to the world. I want the world to know that France is willing to talk to everybody in the world, in every continent.

But I would also like to say that openness is not renunciation. Understanding is not weakness. Weakness and renunciation are not factors of peace; they are factors of war. France and Europe in the past experienced the tragic consequences of such an attitude for themselves and for the whole world. When you are weak and submissive, you get ready to accept war. We all have a duty to ensure that that never happens again. There will be no peace in the world if the international community compromises with the right of peoples to self-determination and if it compromises with human rights.

There will be no peace in the world unless the international community is unshakeable in its determination to fight terrorism. There will be no peace in the world unless the international community stands united in its resolve to put an end to the wars in the Middle East, to put an end to the horror in Darfur, to the tragedy of Lebanon or to the humanitarian disaster in Somalia. And I weigh my words carefully. There will be no peace in the world if the international community falters in the face of the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Iran is entitled to nuclear power for civilian purposes. But if we allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons, there would be an unacceptable risk to stability in the region and in the world. I want to say here, in the name of France, that we can only resolve this crisis by combining firmness with dialogue. It is in that spirit that France will act.

I want to say here, in the name of France, that it is the duty of the international community to confront those who seek power and constantly threaten the fragile balance of peace and to do so by bringing to bear its unwavering unity and its determination to uphold the law. I want to say, in the name of France, that there will be no peace in the world without respect for diversity, without respect for national identities, without respect, I venture to say, for religions and beliefs, or without respect for cultures. Attachment to one's faith, to one's identity, to one's language and culture, and to one's way of life, thought and belief — all that is legitimate, and profoundly human. To deny that is to sow the seeds of humiliation. It would stoke the fires of nationalism, fanaticism and terrorism. We will not avert the clash of civilizations by forcing everyone to think and to believe the same things. France intends to pursue, together with all people of goodwill, this battle to build a new world order of the twenty-first century.

We want a Lebanon living independently, and we say that France will always stand shoulder to shoulder with Lebanon in its desire for independence. Tomorrow we hope that Israelis and Palestinians will find within themselves the strength to live in peace. Peace is possible. It is possible now. And we will devote all of our energies to that.

We want to see the peaceful coexistence of the main religions to vanquish fundamentalism and fanaticism. But I want to say, with all due gravity, that there is too much injustice in the world for the world to hope to live in peace.

The founding fathers of the United Nations knew that the world's future could be read in the eyes of a tortured child; a hungry child; children who watch their parents being humiliated; children who since birth have known nothing but war; children torn from their homes, their lands, their families. Because in those children's desperate eyes there is not only suffering, but also all the wars and revolts that will drench the world in blood tomorrow.

Let us look at the world as it is. Let us look at what we have made of it. Have we wanted enough to make it more just? The answer is no. Have we done enough to achieve that end? The answer is no.

When the Berlin wall fell, we all dreamed that history would cease to be tragic. Let us look at our world as it is so that we can make it better. Let us judge our world by the yardstick of justice. Justice means that the Palestinian people can regain a country

and build a State. Justice means that the Israeli people can enjoy the right to live in security. Justice means that the Lebanese people can regain their freedom. Justice means that the Iraqi people, in all their diversity, can find within themselves the path to reconciliation and democracy. Justice means that a developing country on which we wish to impose environmental rules, even though its inhabitants have barely enough to eat, can be helped to put such rules in place. Justice means that we cannot tap a country's resources without paying a fair price for them.

Let us look squarely at our world. Never before has there been so much easy money, with so much wealth concentrated in the hands of a few large groups. Throughout the world, even in the richest countries, there are many men and women who no longer have even a hope of emerging some day from their material and moral distress.

In conclusion, I appeal to the conscience of all those who have a responsibility for the conduct of world affairs. Because if we do nothing, the poor and the exploited will one day rise up against the injustice done to them.

What the world needs is a new mindset: a genuine New Deal on a global scale, an ecological and economic New Deal. On behalf of France, I call on all States to join together to found the new world order of the twenty-first century, predicated on the key idea that the common goods of humanity must be the responsibility of all of humanity.

On behalf of France, I solemnly appeal to the United Nations to provide itself, in this era marked by the return of scarcity, with the means to guarantee that all people throughout the world have access to vital resources: water, energy, food, medicine and knowledge. I solemnly appeal to the United Nations to concern itself with the issue of fairer distribution of wealth and of the income derived from commodities and technology. I solemnly appeal to the United Nations to concern itself with the moralization of financial capitalism. I solemnly appeal to the United Nations to go further in combating corruption, which saps countries that are suffering and all too poor.

Things must change. Mindsets must change. Behaviour must change. This is our responsibility now, because tomorrow it will be too late. If we fail to act, we will see a resurgence of all the threats that the people of the post-war world believed they had overcome. Let us not take this risk lightly.

Peoples of the world, we can, together, build a better future for all people. It is up to us alone; it is up to our capacity to remain faithful to the values that have brought us together here today. You have understood. France believes that we have no more time to wait. France calls for action. France urges action. France is committed to action in the service of world peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Daniel Ortega Saavedra, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Daniel Ortega Saavedra, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Daniel Ortega Saavedra, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ortega Saavedra (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to begin by remembering the millions of human beings who are the victims of the policies of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Let us remember the victims of the Holocaust. Let us remember the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Let us remember the victims of slavery and apartheid. Let us remember the victims of the wars of occupation of Viet Nam and Afghanistan, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Panama and Nicaragua. Let us remember the heroic and noble Cuban people, who have suffered all kinds of aggression and a brutal and inhumane blockade. Let us remember the five heroes who are prisoners of the empire because they were fighting terrorism. Let us remember the victims of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the millions and millions of men and women who have been and continue to be victims of the genocide caused by global

capitalism. Let us remember the victims of discrimination and apartheid at the hands of those who refuse to admit into the developed countries, peoples who, in Latin America, are attempting to come into the United States, and people in Africa and Asia who are trying to go to the European nations. Our thoughts, our appreciation and our solidarity go to the victims of natural disasters, who are at the same time victims of global imperialist capitalism, which, through its development-oriented policy continues to bring destruction, death and poverty, becoming the greatest aggressor of mother Earth, now destroyed by the avarice of imperialist capitalism.

Let us remember the recent victims of natural occurrences triggered by these spoliations resulting from imperialist global capitalism: the victims of Hurricane Katrina, the victims of the earthquake in Peru, the victims of the floods in Africa, the victims among the indigenous peoples — the Miskito and Mayan peoples — of Hurricane Felix, in Central America, Latin America and the Caribbean and the land of Sandino and Rubén Darío. Our brothers and sisters in the Miskito and Mayan peoples who achieved autonomy in 1987 and who, today, are part of a process whereby their full rights will be recognized under the Autonomy Act, have asked me to express their appreciation to the United Nations because that battle has been going on for more than 20 years and now we are beginning to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples. They have asked me to circulate here, in the United Nations, a document signed by our brothers, the leaders of the Miskito and Mayan peoples, Afrodescendant peoples, victims of Hurricane Felix, so that it may be seen by you all, our brothers and sisters who represent the peoples of the world.

In the period from 1979 to 1989, I had the opportunity to speak before the United Nations General Assembly, and I remember well the speeches and messages and positions from that time. Eighteen years have gone by, and thanks to the unending struggle of the Sandinist people, I am here again today to address these words to the Assembly. This morning, when this general debate began, I listened carefully to the words of the second speaker, who spoke for exactly 20 minutes — and I myself hope not to exceed 20 minutes — and I cannot find any difference between the thoughts, words and actions of those who, at the time, were at the helm of that imperialist power, and the speech that I heard this morning.

The presidents of the United States change, and they may come to office with the best intentions and may feel that they are doing good for humanity. But they fail to understand that they are no more than the instruments of yet another empire among the many empires that have imposed themselves on our planet, and they forget that the life of empires is ephemeral. They rise, they grow arrogant and mighty and then begin to dictate as if they were gods — telling people what is good and bad, determining how they provide what they call assistance — which is no more than paying back the historical debt they owe to our peoples. What they are doing is simply responding to empire, to the politics of Empire and for that reason we should not be surprised that not only are we hearing the same speeches all over again, but also that we are seeing the same conditions of oppression and violence and terror being suffered by humanity. And today, we are more threatened than we were 18 years ago when I last had the opportunity to speak before the United Nations.

Today, under the tyranny of global imperialist capitalism, there is an international economic order, of course there is, but who dictates that international economic order? It is dictated by a minority of dictators who impose their interests, the same old interests. They are the ones who enslaved Africans and enslaved and oppressed our indigenous forefathers. They are the ones who wiped out the original peoples of the United States. Then immigrants from Europe came over here and unperturbedly — by what right? — began to mix with those people, and to become in turn, owners of what did not belong to them. They robbed the original peoples of their rights and their cultures and imposed their culture and the interests of the colonizers. That is what gave rise to what we call today the most exemplary democracy in the world, when really, it is a tyranny — the biggest, most overwhelming dictatorship that has ever existed throughout the history of humanity.

I am referring to the tyranny of the United States empire. If anyone has doubts, let us see how its President spoke to us this morning. He spoke of Cuba with a complete lack of respect while representing a system that ordered the assassination of its President, our dear brother Fidel Castro, whom we had for his extraordinary solidarity, firmness and principled consistency in his struggle for the cause of humankind.

They have maintained a brutal blockade against Cuba, while for interests of State, they set aside their so-called democratic principles when, for economic reasons, they act together with other nations with which they supposedly have ideological differences: capital unites them and ideological differences disappear.

On what authority and by what right does he question the right of the peoples of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to nuclear development for peaceful purposes? And even if they wanted to use nuclear power for military purposes, on whose authority and by what right does the only State in history to have dropped atomic bombs on innocent people, as it did on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, condemn the people of Iran, who are working to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes? They have decided that this is not for peaceful purposes, but who gave them that right? They gave it to themselves, and they are imposing that on the General Assembly, and the Assembly is simply a reflection of the realities of a world where a capitalist and imperialist minority is imposing global capitalism and establishing an order to exploit, repress, impoverish, enslave and impose apartheid against Latin American migrants and against African migrants in Europe. Global capitalism has only one head, but it has tentacles everywhere.

On what authority can the country that possesses the greatest nuclear arsenal in the world, or any other country possessing nuclear weapons, come here and seek to question the rights of other countries to the peaceful development of nuclear energy? What moral authority do they have to question the right of any people to develop nuclear energy for peaceful or even for military purposes?

Objectively, this is not the best path for humankind. The best path for humankind is for nuclear weapons to disappear altogether. If the United States, its people and its Presidents — and I do not want to single out any individual President or leader of an empire; an empire is an empire, and it does not matter who is heading the empire, whether they call themselves Democrat or Republican — really want to demonstrate their commitment to putting an end to the threat of nuclear energy being used for military purposes, then they have to be the first to move towards a policy of nuclear disarmament, a policy that should encompass all those that possess nuclear weapons. Then they would have the moral authority to say that no people in the world should devote resources to developing nuclear technology for military purposes. Then, all nations would have the possibility and the right to opt for nuclear energy for peaceful purposes — an option that they would seek to deny to developing peoples.

Eighteen years ago, from this very rostrum, I spoke of the Palestinian issue. The Palestinian people endure an ongoing bloody conflict with a country that possesses nuclear weapons and that is entrenched in the historic territory of the Palestinian people.

Eighteen years ago we spoke of the people of Puerto Rico, a nation which is still fighting for its independence. The United States continues unambiguously to pursue its neo-colonial policies, combining the most advanced and modern forms of domination with the most retrograde forms of domination, such as its military base in Guantánamo.

Eighteen years ago we spoke of armament, and nothing has changed. Eighteen years ago we spoke of war, and today things look much worse because of the brutal war imposed by the empire and by its economic and oil interests. They thought it would be easy to occupy Iraq and Afghanistan, but they have met with resistance from those peoples. It was an invasion launched on the basis of a campaign of lies: it was uncertain that Iraq was in a position to produce nuclear weapons.

So what can I conclude. I can conclude that the enemy is still the same after these 18 years: here I am again in the United Nations, and the enemy is still the same.

The enemy is called global imperialist capitalism and it is only we, the people, who can change things. Peoples that have attained liberation were not given it by those that enslaved them, but rather thanks to their own struggle and the blood they shed, for example in South Africa's independence struggle. How many years of disgrace, suffering, slavery and apartheid did they endure in South Africa? That story is true for the whole of the African continent. Those peoples achieved their freedom despite modern colonialists consistently trying to sustain these forms of occupation. To be sure, they have adopted new forms of occupation and domination.

The liberation of our peoples is not guaranteed. Our peoples must continue to give battle. The unity of our peoples is the key: the unity of the Latin American

peoples, the Central American peoples and the Caribbean peoples under the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). They are trying to repeat the kind of action taken against Venezuela, when a democratically elected president was faced with a military coup. They are trying to repeat the history of Salvador Allende, the history of Chile. But the United Nations was not convened to say what barbarity had taken place. Yet what had happened in Venezuela needed to be condemned, because the Government had been democratically elected. But no: in fact, the imperialist Power moved immediately to recognize the leaders of the coup. It was the Venezuelan people who rose up to return the elected President to his place. Thus, it is the people who decide their own fate.

Hence, we can all be full of the best intentions about changing the United Nations. I do not doubt that even representatives of countries that espouse global capitalism and imperialism come here with the best of intentions — some of them. But they lose sight of the fact that they are continuing their handout proposals and approaches — for these are indeed handouts. When they talk about aid, they are insulting us. They have to understand that once and for all. They have profited from the privatization carried out in developing countries by the huge multinational corporations. They say that they come to help us. What businessman comes to help? When a businessman invests, he invests in order to make the biggest profit he can: not to invest in the country, but rather to take away, because we developing countries are considered to be insecure. In short, we are the victims of a ransacking.

Compare the volume of the wealth that the capitalist and developed countries are currently extracting from our countries, the developing countries, through their big companies and multinational corporations with what Latin American immigrants send back to their families from the United States or what Asian and African immigrants in Europe send back to their families: the latter really is a miserable amount compared to the volume of wealth that is being plundered on a daily basis by these institutionalized forms of oppression.

However, immigrants working in the United States or in Europe work harder than anyone else. They are doing jobs that neither Europeans nor Americans want to do, and for miserable wages. So who is doing whom a favour? Indeed, nobody is doing any favours for the Latin Americans who find work in the United States and who manage to put aside a bit of money so they can send $100 or $200 back to their families, compared to the plundering by big businesses, which go to developing countries not only to reap enormous profits, but also to take advantage of cheap labour and the conditionalities imposed by free trade agreements. Human beings, societies and nations are all clashing with free trade, and it remains to be seen who is the strongest. Logically, it will be the strongest who prevail. Free trade is the law of the jungle.

What the world needs is fair trade. What the world demands is genuine change in the capitalist, globalized, imperialist countries. They have to change their concept of a free market; they have to exchange the concept of free trade for that of fair trade and a fair international market. Solving this problem is not a question of reducing subsidies because plainly the disparities are so enormous that that is impossible. This problem will never be resolved piecemeal but through profoundly radical change leading to the democratization of the minority on planet Earth who own the wealth, own the nuclear weapons, impose their policies on the Assembly and go over the heads of the Security Council. They impose their own laws, which are now solidly entrenched, and they have no respect for humanity. It is only by changing the policy within those peoples, within those nations, within those Governments that we can really obtain the fair world that we are all talking about. For we all talk about a just world. We all talk about a peaceful world. We all talk about a world of brotherly love and solidarity. But there is a wide gap between words and deeds.

Dear brothers and sisters, please accept the greetings of the people of Nicaragua, a fighting people, a people that has suffered interference from the empire since 1856 — before the triumph of the October Revolution, the great Lenin revolution. Before the East-West conflict had begun, Nicaragua was already suffering from the expansionist policies of empire; already we had to take arms to defend ourselves against those who wanted to trample upon us and impose Yankee presidents.

Dear brothers and sisters, we ask you to pass on to your peoples our belief — our certainty — that today, more than ever, there exist conditions for unity among the Latin American and Caribbean peoples. We are seeing growing unity among the African peoples. The unity of the Asian peoples must grow as well, but free from global capitalism. What good is speaking

about socialism if what we are actually building is capitalism and if we are just creating a holy alliance with global capitalism and imperialism? We have to build this great unity in Africa, in Asia — and in Latin America, where we are marching with the same strength, the same vigour and the same living principles that were those of the African fighters like Lumumba and Sekou Touré; the principles of the Latin American fighters; the principles of the North American fighters, the United States fighters; the principles of the European fighters; the principles of the Latin America of Bolívar, of Martí, of Sandino, of Tupac Katari, of Tupac Amaru. Those principles still live and will live as long as these forms of oppression persist.

I have faith in God and the certainty that, just as peoples, despite so much oppression and destruction, have not surrendered or sold out, today, more than ever before, peoples should rise up with pride and firmness and dignity. They are not going to sell out and they are not going to surrender to the global capitalist empire.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Daniel Ortega Saavedra, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

I first give the floor to the representative of Greece on a point of order.

Mr. Mourikis (Greece): With regard to your reference to the country of origin of the next speaker, I would like to point out the following.

The Security Council, by its resolution 817 (1993), has recommended, and the General Assembly, by its resolution 47/225 of 8 April 1993, has decided that that country will be provisionally referred to, for all purposes within the United Nations, as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, pending settlement of the difference that has arisen over the name of this State. Furthermore, the Security Council, by its resolution 845 (1993) urged "the parties to continue their efforts under the auspices of the Secretary-General to arrive at a speedy settlement of the remaining issues" (*para. 2*).

I would therefore request that the proper name, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, be used for all purposes within the United Nations, pursuant to the aforementioned resolutions and in view of the fact that there are ongoing negotiations between the two countries.

The President: I am fully aware of the fact pointed out in the statement by the representative of Greece. At the same time, as President of the General Assembly, I am required to show full respect for the dignity of every single State Member of the United Nations, including my own.

I now give the floor to President Branko Crvenkovski.

President Crvenkovski: It is a privilege and an honour for me to address this forum and to share the views of the Republic of Macedonia regarding issues of utmost importance for the current session of the General Assembly. However, allow me first of all to avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate my fellow countryman, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, on his election as President of General Assembly at its sixty-second session. His nomination to this prestigious position is yet another proof of the full dedication of the Republic of Macedonia to the promotion of the aims of this unique global Organization.

I would also like to congratulate the previous General Assembly President, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, for her successful presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-first session. Allow me as well to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on the energetic start of his mandate and his dedication in this time of great importance for our Organization.

The issue of climate change was rightly proposed by the President of the General Assembly as a topic to be discussed during this general debate. The alleviation of the impact of global warming and climate change, which has become one of the greatest challenges for individual countries, but also for the entire international community, calls for the undertaking of coordinated and serious measures. It is our obligation to preserve our planet for the generations to come. Therefore, one of our imperatives would be to provide clear political support in responding to the negative impact of global warming, while not impeding economic growth and the reduction of poverty. In this context, apart from recognizing the central role of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we should also promote consultations within the United Nations environmental institutions.

People around the world expect the United Nations to improve its performance and continue to deliver. For many, this Organization remains a symbol of hope and of support in times of need, but also a helping hand in times of crisis. The world has changed, and so have the challenges. The United Nations must also continue to change in order to be ready to respond.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome created a solid basis for all necessary reforms. A lot has been achieved — perhaps not as much as was expected, but the progress made so far is visible. We must continue working on the reforms of the main bodies, in the interest of transparency and effectiveness.

The Republic of Macedonia strongly supports the current management reform directed towards achieving efficiency and accountability in the United Nations system. The new bodies are already a reality and fully operational. What we expect in particular is the Human Rights Council to strengthen its role in the global promotion and protection of human rights. Driven by our strong will to contribute to the work of this highly important body, we have put forward our application for membership for the period from 2009 to 2012.

The report of the United Nations High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence offered a number of valuable recommendations for the reform of United Nations operational activities. I hope that the discussions during the current session will help to create a consensus on measures to strengthen United Nations capacities in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and environment.

The issue of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation must remain high on our agenda. We must therefore attach further importance to these issues, which are relevant for the achievement of global peace, security and development.

Terrorism continues to threaten our world. The fight against terrorism is yet another area in which we must stand united. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its Plan of Action, adopted last year, provide an excellent framework for our individual and joint actions. We must promote their implementation at the national and regional level and seek to achieve visible results.

At the 2005 World Summit, we reaffirmed our commitment to global partnership for development as stated in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. We fully agree that every country bears the responsibility for its own development, which depends mainly on national policies and strategies. We also agree that global actions are necessary as a support to national efforts.

Some regions need more shared responsibility than others in order to achieve the projected targets. Africa, where the situation remains alarming, requires special attention. With this in mind, we endorse the call for renewed commitment to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and we await the forthcoming High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, which is expected to bring specific results.

United Nations involvement in Africa, including in the Sudan, remains of exceptional importance. The situation in Darfur is extremely critical and alarming. Member States must reunite once again and provide support to United Nations activities in order to respond to the challenges on the ground.

The Middle East situation continues to be an issue of utmost concern. People in the Middle East deserve to live free from fear and threats. The Republic of Macedonia supports the efforts of the Quartet and the Road Map. A renewed peace process is also of utmost urgency. The situation in Lebanon also remains high on the international agenda. Recently, the Republic of Macedonia joined the United Nations forces in that area by sending military officers to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

Since the very beginning, the Republic of Macedonia has been part of the international anti-terrorist coalition in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Republic of Macedonia fully supports the unity of Iraq. We also support the recent Security Council resolution 1770 (2007) regarding an extended role for the Organization in Iraq. Building peace and democracy in those two countries remains a key challenge both for the international community and for the Iraqis and Afghans themselves.

The Republic of Macedonia continues on its path towards a functional multi-ethnic democracy. There are many challenges on that path that we should tackle and obligations that we must fulfil. We are committed to comprehensive reforms in all segments of Macedonian society in order to obtain a date for the beginning of pre-accession negotiations for membership in the European Union in 2008. At the same time, bearing in mind the successful reforms that we have been implementing for years, we are deeply convinced that it would be realistic to obtain an invitation for membership of the Republic of Macedonia in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at the next summit of that organization, scheduled for April 2008 in Bucharest.

The region of South-East Europe has come a long way in the past decade. We are all striving towards the common goal of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, which is a strong driving force in terms of reforms and final stabilization of the region. The Republic of Macedonia remains firmly committed to good-neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, and we believe that dialogue is of key importance for all outstanding issues in the interest of everyone in the region.

We continue to support the efforts of the international community regarding the resolution of the status of Kosovo. At this stage, the Republic of Macedonia hopes that the next round of negotiations and consultations led by the Troika will bring the positions of both parties closer. We also endorse the position that a resolution of the Kosovo issue should be formulated within a reasonable time frame, in the best interest of stability in the region and the region's Euro-Atlantic perspective.

In that context, I would like to underline in particular that we do not agree with the recently mentioned idea of partition of Kosovo according to ethnic lines, since that might have serious negative implications for the entire region. The issue of the technical demarcation of our northern border with Kosovo according to a predefined procedure and agenda remains a top priority for the Republic of Macedonia.

Allow me to assure the Assembly that we will spare no efforts translating our words into actions, so that people around the world may be convinced of our commitment to respecting and implementing the principles and values enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Finally — with or without any points of order — the name of my country is the Republic of Macedonia and will be the Republic of Macedonia.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly and in my own name, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Macedonia for the statement just made.

Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mutharika: I am happy to have this opportunity to address the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I convey my congratulations Mr. Kerim on his election as President of the Assembly at this session. The Malawi Government would like to assure him of our support in carrying out his duties as President.

I also take this opportunity to thank our hosts, President George W. Bush and the Government and the people of the United States of America, for the hospitality accorded to me and my delegation since our arrival in the state of New York.

I commend the previous President of the Assembly, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, for the sterling leadership, direction and guidance she gave in steering the Assembly at its sixty-first session.

I wish to focus my address on Malawi's efforts to meet the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Malawi believes that the MDGs are the tools for enhancing growth and development and for improving the livelihood of people in the poor countries of the world. I am pleased to state that my country is making steady progress in the implementation of the MDGs. We have adopted the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy as a home-grown overarching national policy for creating new wealth, for achieving sustainable economic growth and development and for combating the poverty that still engulfs many of our people.

The people of Malawi share a common vision to eliminate poverty in the shortest period possible by transforming the country from a predominantly importing and consuming to a predominantly manufacturing and exporting economy. That, we believe, will enable our country to position itself within the global economy and to compete favourably in the world markets.

To achieve that vision, we are implementing a sound system of economic governance in both the public and private sectors. That includes fighting corruption, reform of the public and private sectors, safeguarding human rights and the rule of law, increasing social protection for vulnerable groups, and developing infrastructure for development. My Government has also placed research, science and technology, including information and communications technology, gender empowerment and environmental protection, at the top of our development paradigm.

Based on the limitation of our resources, financial and human alike, we have identified six priorities within priorities that we believe can pull Malawi out of the poverty trap. Those include agricultural development and food security, irrigation and water development, transport and communications infrastructure development, energy and power, integrated rural development, and management and prevention of HIV and AIDS. I am pleased to report that the Malawi Government began to implement those priorities in 2004 and that, by 2006, we had achieved a phenomenal growth rate of 8.5 per cent. We therefore believe that the selection of these top priorities is a good one. We are also implementing an effective system of income distribution targeting the rural poor. I can therefore boldly say that the Malawi Government is confident that most of the Millennium Development Goals will be met or even surpassed by the year 2015.

I now wish to briefly review some of the Millennium Development Goals. For instance, we are certain to decrease by half the proportion of the population that suffers from extreme poverty and hunger, and to improve their nutritional status by the year 2015. Malawi has also made significant progress in the past three years in reducing poverty. In 1998, for instance, people living below the poverty line represented 53.9 per cent of the total population. That number was reduced to 45 per cent in 2006.

For the past two years, Malawi has achieved a high rate of agricultural production and food security. Presently, Malawi has a food surplus amounting to 1.4 million metric tons over and above our national food requirement. We are now able to export food to other countries in southern Africa.

Malawi has one of the highest budgetary allocations to agriculture and food security. We are empowering smallholder farmers to access essential farm inputs, mainly seeds and fertilizer, through a subsidy programme. We also support the development of viable small-, medium- and large-scale irrigation schemes to reduce dependence on rain-fed agriculture.

The other aspect of the MDGs that Malawi considers critical is the reduction in maternal and child mortality. Here again, my country has achieved remarkable progress, largely through the adoption of the Essential Health Package as the main strategy for the delivery of a cost-effective package of health services through a donor-funded sector-wide approach programme. We are also addressing the challenge to reduce the under-five mortality rate by two thirds by the year 2015 and to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters.

We have identified several highly preventable and treatable diseases, such as malaria, pneumonia,

diarrhoea and malnutrition. Malawi is therefore on track towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals. We have reduced the rate of child deaths per 1,000 from 189 live births in 2000 to 133 in 2006.

In the fight against malaria, Malawi has so far distributed about 5 million insecticide-treated mosquito nets to various households. The percentage of pregnant women and children under five sleeping under treated nets increased from 8 per cent in 2000 to 20 per cent in 2006. In 2007, we plan to give out 3 million more mosquito nets with support from the Global Fund and President George Bush's Malaria Initiative in that area.

One of Malawi's biggest challenges is the management and prevention of tuberculosis, whose prevalence rate is very high, especially with regard to patients having HIV and AIDS. The Malawi Government has therefore declared tuberculosis to be an emergency and launched a five-year plan for addressing the problem.

I am pleased to state that Malawi is one of the few African countries that have been successful in meeting the challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Malawi has also been successful in its public awareness campaign about the HIV/AIDS epidemic and its consequences. In 2004, Malawi had 14 voluntary counselling and testing centres, and those have now been increased to 250. Over 5 million people within Malawi have been tested within a period of less than three years. With the support of the Bill Clinton Foundation, Malawi now has over 130,000 people receiving free antiretroviral drugs. Additionally, in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and AIDS, we are now reaching over 60 per cent of pregnant women in Malawi. The General Assembly may wish to note that the Malawi national HIV and AIDS and antiretroviral therapy programmes are among the fastest growing in the world and that the pandemic is showing signs of a decline.

I wish to reiterate the statement I made to this Assembly in 2006 that we should regard HIV and AIDS not only as a medical crisis, but also as having economic, socio-cultural and political dimensions. That being the case, the solution to the crisis must be comprehensive and holistic. I have therefore established a Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS in my Office as a technical arm in implementing the Millennium Development Goals. I am also pleased to report that, from 2004 to date, Malawi has developed a national nutrition policy and accompanying documents as a guide for action. As a result, 350,000 orphans are now getting nutrition support. That has reduced the negative impacts of malnutrition, HIV and AIDS, such as absenteeism, and many of those affected now return to work quickly and are reintegrated into the economy.

The Government of Malawi recognizes that water is life. We have therefore placed high priority on the development of our water resources. We are rehabilitating water-supply schemes and are constructing many earthen dams country-wide to allow rural communities access to clean water. Currently, about 66 per cent of the population has access to safe and clean water. Malawi is therefore confident that the MDG on access to water for all will be achieved before 2015.

In the area of universal primary education, the MDGs have set the target for universal primary education for both boys and girls. Malawi has a very high budget allocation for education, science and technology, in order to meet the relevant MDG. To date, 60 per cent of Malawi's children are enrolled in primary schools. We are also creating a conductive teaching and learning environment in order to reduce absenteeism, poor performance and drop-out rates.

Malawi is on the right path to achieving the Goal on the management of natural resources and environmental sustainability. We have reviewed our natural resources policies, legislation and programmes to curb the misuse and abuse of natural resources and to prevent environmental degradation. My Government is involving rural communities in the management of such existing resources as forestry, as well as in annual national tree planting for reforestation and the prevention of soil erosion and desertification. Furthermore, the Government is implementing management programmes for the sequestration of carbon, as well as other ecosystem services to encourage the extensive planting of trees.

In the area of gender equality the MDGs set out to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women by integrating targeted programmes for women to enable them to become part of economic growth. Malawi has a high level of female adult illiteracy, namely, 48 per cent — as compared to 24 per cent for men. However, girls in Malawi also have a high drop-out rate from the formal schooling system, as well as

high vulnerability to HIV and AIDS infection. We are addressing those problems.

My Government is also empowering women in the political, economic and social areas. In the past three years, there have been more women in ministerial and other management positions than ever before. The following key positions are now held by women: the posts of attorney-general, deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of Malawi, five full Cabinet ministers, one deputy minister, chairperson of the human rights commission, clerk of Parliament and several ambassadors, principal secretaries and chairpersons of statutory corporations.

I would like to conclude by stating that Malawi has successfully positioned itself to attain the MDGs. We are optimistic that many of those objectives will be attained. We therefore appeal to the United Nations to recognize Malawi's heroic efforts and assist us to maintain the development momentum.

I would also like to appeal to our development partners to support Malawi's policy to manufacture new goods and to provide new services to meet the MDGs. We need support to conduct our own research and to apply science and technology — including information and communication technology — to create new wealth, to build new capacity and to move Malawi from poverty to prosperity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President returned to the Chair.

Address by Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chile.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Bachelet Jeria (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly. I would also like to reiterate Chile's support for the new Secretary-General. Chile will participate in all the undertakings of the United Nations.

The international community knows about my people's devotion to peace, justice, freedom and solidarity. It knows that this country at the southern edge of the world — despite the size of its economy and population, as well as its remoteness — has espoused the great causes of humankind. It knows about Chile's contributions in the areas of poverty, AIDS, hunger and social cohesion. It knows that we have made substantial contributions to the promotion and observance of human rights. It knows that, even in difficult times, we have always supported international law and world peace — with dignity and determination.

Mine is a country that believes in progress and in the ability of human beings to be the authors of their own destiny and to build a better future. The world is an uncertain place when we are not able to act together. Globalization becomes unpredictable when we are not able to manage it. That is the reason we need to promote the greatest possible sustainable development with greater justice and social equity for all humankind. To that end, it is crucial that we craft agreements and strengthen multilateral institutions, all the while making progress in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation; that we begin negotiations on the reform and expansion of the Security Council; and that we make progress in the area of management reform — on the subject of which Chile, South Africa, Sweden and Thailand have put forth a proposal for the consideration of Member States.

The major tasks facing us today will probably require more consensus-building than ever before known. How can we ensure once and for all that human

an international community, must today tackle urgently and with dedication.

Chile will vigorously promote universal respect for human rights. The establishment of a fairer and more humane international order will be possible only if we place respect for the dignity of the human person at the heart of the debate. We in Chile will work not only to improve our own practices and domestic legislation, but also to promote the strengthening of human rights, economic and social development, peace and security.

As the General Assembly is aware, human rights have been at centre of Chile's recent history. For the citizens of my country no place is too remote nor any situation too foreign when it comes to protecting human lives and dignity.

We are pleased with the progress made in the area of norms, both internationally and nationally. We welcome the adoption and opening for signature of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which fills a gap in the system for protecting human rights from a crime against humanity. Chile signed that instrument and expects to ratify it in the near future. In addition, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is in the process of being approved by our National Congress.

The new United Nations Human Rights Council should continue to promote a more effective international regime for protection, early warning and promotion in the area of human rights. We also strongly support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is a very important step in the recognition of the rights of those peoples.

We shall also work to ensure that democracy and freedom are consolidated throughout the world. Democracy is a universal value, but it is a process that must be supported over time. That is why we will strongly support the United Nations Democracy Fund, so that this aspiration becomes a reality.

We are studying with concern the scientific

In Chile, for example, we have seen that the speed with which the glaciers are melting has doubled in the past ten years. Our southern zones are, in turn, experiencing a dangerous depletion of the ozone layer, jeopardizing the health of our citizens. Although we are not the ones mainly responsible for this deterioration, Chile has begun to take the necessary steps to mitigate the effects of global warming and to combine efforts so that, as a matter of urgency, solutions may be found.

As has been said here many times, there is no time to lose. The consensus that we must reach, the effort to enlist the greatest possible support, is comparable only to the international mobilization that led to the adoption of the San Francisco Charter six decades ago. If we do not act now, the future of all humanity will be endangered.

Therefore we all have the obligation to construct a new global political consensus to generate collective action capable of solving the problem in accordance with the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility and within the framework of the United Nations. All of us must contribute, but especially those who have already polluted and achieved development. We ask the developed countries to pledge technical and financial assistance to the developing countries that most need help with their efforts to combat climate change.

We strongly hope that at the meetings of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol to be held in December in Bali, progress will be made in defining the parameters of a post-2012 process. We also hope that the developed countries will make greater commitments regarding mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and financing.

We must, however, realize that the greatest efforts by the developed countries will not suffice to halt climate change. It is also necessary that the developing countries take additional emission reduction actions in the framework of a global effort within the scope of the Convention.

that there is a serious threat to our future, and we must act now.

becoming the country that we all deeply desire, enjoying greater prosperity and greater social justice. We are eradicating poverty. In 17 years of democracy,

we have reduced poverty from 40 to 13.7 per cent. We have achieved practically all of the Millennium Development Goals. It is an ambitious objective, but one that is justified by our achievements. We are constructing a social welfare system that guarantees the social rights of Chilean men and women from the cradle to old age. We are protecting our children — girls and boys, our young people, our mothers and fathers, grandfathers and grandmothers.

We know that we are not alone in this effort. Poverty, hunger, extreme inequality and exclusion are realities that exist all over the world. With regard to the fulfilment of the Millennium Goals, progress has been made in some regions, but it is not enough. We, therefore, join in the commitment to the forthcoming launch of the Global Business Plan for Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 — that is, to greatly reduce maternal and child mortality. We do not need new commitments; we simply need to fulfil the commitments already made.

My country supports the idea of holding an international conference to focus concerted worldwide efforts on attaining the Millennium Goals, proposed by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, so that the dream of also globalizing the prosperity that some have already achieved can come true in the not too distant future.

We can also emphasize innovative development financing mechanisms for development in order to combat inequality and promote social cohesion.

We are on the right track. As the Assembly knows well, the Presidents of Brazil, France, Chile, Spain and Germany, among others, organized an Initiative on Action Against Hunger and Poverty and their UNITAID Initiative, through which we have managed to collect hundreds of millions of dollars to finance the purchase of drugs to treat AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria; these medicines have been given to hundreds of thousands of children, mainly in Africa.

But we have to do more. Social equity and the construction of a world with a human face should

to effective and efficient multilateralism, with the United Nations as its centre of gravity. We are at a complex juncture, but one of great opportunity. What we do or fail to do in the next few years will determine the future of our descendants. It all depends on us. Now is the time to act.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Chile for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. José Socrates, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. José Socrates, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic,, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. José Socrates, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Socrates (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I have the honour to address this General Assembly on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to start, Mr. President, by wishing you all the best in the mandate you are beginning. I would like you to know that you can count on the firm support of the European Union (EU) throughout this General Assembly, certain that you will continue the excellent work of your predecessor, Ms. Haya Al-Khalifa, whom I would also like to congratulate.

Since this is the first session of the General Assembly to be convened since our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, assumed office, I also wish to take

which we live, only strong multilateral institutions can promote the fundamental values of peace, democracy,

human rights and development. This is why the EU supports the primacy of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security as the foundation and focal point of our shared ambitions and concerted efforts. And that is why we adopted effective multilateralism and a rules-based international order as the objective of the European security strategy.

Let me make this clear: if the new century has taught us only one lesson, it is that global challenges require global responses. What is needed is effective multilateralism. That is what we are engaged in here at the United Nations, and that is what we are seeking to promote in the United Nations. The message that I wish to leave with members today, on behalf of the EU, is that they can rely on us to make effective multilateralism a reality, today.

I propose to begin with what is undoubtedly one of the greatest objectives that we in the United Nations have so far set for ourselves, which is to meet the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Those goals are demanding, but they should not discourage us; on the contrary, they should inspire us to accelerate our work and enhance its effectiveness in eradicating poverty, building a true partnership for development, promoting education for all and decent health standards and combating climate change.

In that context, I must mention one of the stated objectives of the European Union: the adoption of a joint EU-Africa strategy to be endorsed by the second EU-Africa summit, to be held in Lisbon in December. I mention that objective because it is a clear sign of our times: a strategy, defined jointly by Africans and Europeans, that reflects our commitment to the MDGs and is in keeping with the activities of both continents' multilateral institutions. It is an inclusive and ambitious strategy that reflects the progress made in Euro-African cooperation in a broad range of areas and sets standards to be met through shared responses to the challenges likewise shared by the continents of Africa and Europe.

Climate change is one of the great global

I was pleased to take part in the high-level event on climate change. Its results are encouraging and give rise to optimism. They clearly show a political will to move forward. Sustainable development and emission reductions must go hand in hand; therefore, they are our shared responsibility. This initiative will add momentum to the formulation of a post-2012 global comprehensive agreement on a climate regime. I believe that we should agree to begin negotiations on such a regime at the Bali climate change conference, to be held in December. I wish to make it absolutely clear that the EU will make every effort to achieve an ambitious and solid international consensus at the conference.

Even more important, however, we need everyone's support. The EU has already unilaterally committed itself to cutting its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20 per cent. But we want to go further, and we are prepared to do so. That is why we announced that, as part of a future global agreement on climate rules, we would increase that commitment to 30 per cent. Here, I would like to reiterate our call for global emissions to be reduced by at least 50 per cent of their 1990 levels by 2050. I believe that by undertaking those commitments, the EU is sending a clear signal that it wishes to lead these global efforts.

I also wish to say something about reform of the institutional framework for United Nations environmental efforts. The EU firmly believes that ambitious reform is required if we are to achieve real change. In that context, the EU is in favour of transforming the United Nations Environment Programme into a specialized agency — a United Nations Environment Organization — because we believe it is essential to take heed of international public opinion.

Sustainable development also involves respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights throughout the world. We believe that that is crucial and that it must remain at the centre of all United Nations sectoral activities. The General Assembly's Third Committee should continue to play a central role in promoting and protecting human rights throughout the world. At the present session, the EU will do its

situation in Myanmar. We express our solidarity with the people of that country and call on its authorities to

respect human rights. In particular, we call on them to refrain from using any form of violence against people who are engaged in peaceful protest. The authorities must endeavour to promote a genuine process of political reconciliation, because that is what democracy and respect for human rights require.

I wish to reaffirm the EU's long-standing opposition to the death penalty and to reiterate once again our appeal for its total abolition throughout the world. In that regard, the EU will, together with countries from every region of the world, formulate a draft resolution on a universal moratorium on, and abolition of, the death penalty.

Effective multilateralism also requires a concerted response to the ever-widening range of threats to international peace and security.

We welcome the establishment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur so that we can jointly contribute to the political resolution of that conflict, which has had tragic humanitarian consequences in the Sudan and the entire region. In order to address those consequences, the European Union reaffirms its support for the deployment of a multidimensional presence in eastern Chad and the northern Central African Republic and welcomes the opening of political talks on Darfur, which will take place in Libya on 27 October.

But peace and security are also a challenge in Europe. We share the opinion of the Secretary-General that the status quo in Kosovo is not sustainable. For that reason, the European Union supports and participates actively in the ongoing efforts of the international community, namely those of the Troika, to bring the parties closer together and obtain a comprehensive political solution that will lead to a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo and will contribute to the consolidation of stability and prosperity in that part of Europe: the Balkans. We urge both parties to engage constructively and creatively in that process. The European Union stands ready to play a significant role in the implementation of a future status settlement at the end of the negotiations.

The European Union, as a member of the Quartet, reiterates its commitment to reaching a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict. That can happen only through the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

The stabilization of Lebanon will also contribute to the stabilization of the Middle East. Resolving the present political crisis requires a special commitment and dialogue by Lebanon's leaders and the countries of the region. For its part, the European Union is committed to ensuring Lebanon's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

In the same manner, the European Union continues to support the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the wider region.

All terrorist acts are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, their form or their manifestation. We must therefore make resolute efforts to counter terrorism, but that must be done in accordance with our obligations under international law, while fully respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, the protection of which are essential in tackling the threat of terrorism.

I wish to say a word, from the standpoint of Europe, about the Alliance of Civilizations. It is an important and timely initiative that seeks to strengthen dialogue among peoples, cultures and religions. The European Union supports the appointment of former Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio to the post of High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations and welcomes his action plan. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the commitment of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations, for which we ask for everyone's support.

For centuries, international trade has been the main means of bringing different cultures and peoples together. That is why we also call for the earliest possible agreement in the World Trade Organization's Doha Development Round. This month will be absolutely crucial for the Doha Development Agenda. Therefore, it is vital for all key members to show a spirit of compromise and constructiveness and the genuine will to commit to a fair and balanced

of that. I am referring to Timor-Leste, which, thanks to

the efforts and commitment of the international community to consolidate the foundations of its statehood, its democracy and its development, recently successfully held its first independently organized elections. But, notwithstanding that success — which is enormous — the presence of all players continues to be required, to ensure the country's political, economic and social stability.

We believe and wish to make it clear, here, beyond all doubt that the only possible response to the challenges of our times lies in effective multilateralism based on the United Nations system. For that reason we remain committed to the reform of its main bodies in order to enhance the Organization's representivity, transparency and effectiveness.

Political will is needed in order to adapt our international system to the challenges we face today. The General Assembly and the Secretary-General can rely on the European Union to help turn that political will into action. The response to those challenges lies in active and effective multilateralism. For all of us, it lies in the United Nations and in support for the Organization. That is the final message I wish to convey to the General Assembly on behalf of the European Union.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Socrates, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.